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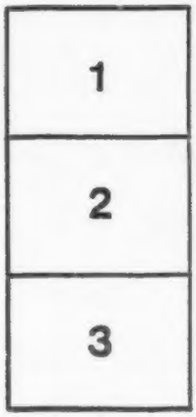

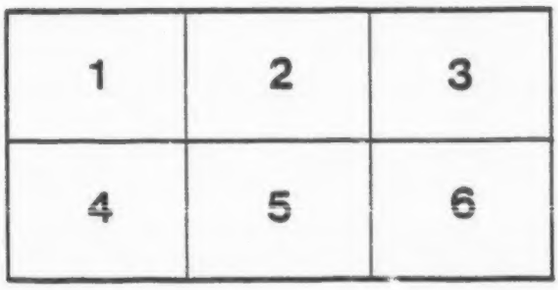

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HISTORY OF IRELAND,

CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTICAL,

From the Earliest Times

TILL THE DEATH OF HENRY II.

BY THE LATE

REV. D. FALLOON, DD., LL.D.

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PREFACE.

To write history is at all times a difficult task, but to write a history of the Irish nation is more than commonly difficult. This arises, to an important degree, from the prejudices engendered by a diversity in race and in religion amongst those to whom, it might be presumed, that such a performance would be chiefly interesting. But the difficulty is greatly enhanced by the paucity of ancient and authentic records, which, in a work like the present, should not only serve for reference and authority, but be, in fact, the basis of a reliable historical narrative. It is unfortunate, in the case of Ireland, that the confusion and devastation which attended the Danish invasion produced, amongst other results, the almost total destruction of those manuscript records of preceding ages, which, whether they referred to the times preceding the introduction of Christianity into the island or those succeeding that event, were preserved in the monastic seats of learning, and, therefore, in the destruction of the latter, fell a prey to the ferocity of ignorant and pagan invaders. The belief is, in some quarters, entertained that the Norman conquerors imitated, in this respect, the conduct of the Danes, destroying, as far as possible, what had escaped the notice or the violence of these ruthless pirates: but, whatever were the faults of the Normans, and how atrocious soever was their conduct towards Ireland, the charge in question can hardly be substantiated. It is, indeed, to be regetted that for an account of the events succeeding their invasion we are so dependent on one of their own historians, Giraldus Cambrensis, whose transparent hatred of the Irish people make his statements, in relation to their character and habits at that era, not always reliable.

Still, whatever be the difficulties to be encountered by the student of Irish history, arising from the causes just adverted to, sufficient facilities remain to enable any person competent, and willing to make use of them, to form an impartial idea of that ancient glory of the Irish people, from which, in later ages, having declined, they presented the aspect of civil anarchy, with its consequent social and religious results, as their normal condition. Numerous writers have, at different periods since the English conquest, carefully gathered up whatever remained either in the form of manuscript records or authenticated tradition [available as collateral proof.] that could, at their respective eras, be discovered. A mere list of their names would be too lengthened for our present purpose; nor indeed, is it quite necessary, since the readers of this volume will perceive that its lamented author has referred his statements on particular subjects to the authority of several amongst these writers. In the notes will be found an abundance of such references, made originally by the author before he left his native country, and when he had ample materials for this work at his command. A few of these authorities referred to, have been satisfactorily consulted by the editor since the manuscript of this history came into his hands, and the accuracy of the rest may, in his firm belief, be taken for granted. They will assuredly be so by those who were acquainted with the exact literary habits of the deceased author, as well as with the judicious and impartial character of his mind.

One of the difficulties to be encountered in writing history, at the present time, results from the general desire for a somewhat dramatic and sensational style. At this the author has not directly aimed; and yet, we think, that his book will be found eminently readable. If the most critical attention to the purest sources of information, an exact and logical method in his arrangement of historical facts and his deductions from them, an eloquence which occasionally scintillates its brightness even through dull

historical details, form a claim to popularity—then this History of Ireland ought to be popular. There is neither the learned profundity of Robertson, the majestic grandiloquence of Gibbon, nor the fluent raciness of Macaulay in the author's mode of treating his subject; but there are qualities of perhaps greater value to the general reader, transparent in the book. It is besides a timely production on this side of the Atlantic, and clearly manifests the fatal injury which divisions amongst the people and their leaders, insubordination to established authority, and the want of true patriotism are inevitably calculated to produce.

In preparing for the press the materials left to his discretion, the editor has sought to preserve, as far as possible, the phraseology of the lamented author, so that his friends may generally recognize his accustomed style—a style, at once imaginative and eloquent, classical and pure. In a book which, according to the design of its author, must be brief, brevity might appear to be almost incompatible with clearness,* but both will be found delectably conjoined in this volume. It will no doubt, be regretted by many lovers of Irish History that comparatively so little is given respecting the life and times of Concover MacNessa (p. 49); of Conn "of the hundred battles" (p. 56); of Finn MacCoul (p. 59); of Nial "of the nine hostages" (p. 66.); and, at a period still later, of Brian Boru. who was at once the Solon and the Epaminondas of his country. Again, in the ecclesiastical portions of the volume, regret will probably be felt that more copious details are not furnished; but it must be remembered that all these things could not be introduced into a popular "handbook" of Irish History: whilst the dissertation on Ancient Irish Philosophy in Chapter VI., the calm and judicious remarks on the constitution of the Irish monarchy occasionally interpersed through the earlier portion of the book, the summary of the Lives of St. Patrick, (p. 80), of Columba,†

* Horace, *Epistola ad Pisones*, 26.

† Or Colum-kill "*the dove of the Churches.*"

of the justly celebrated John Scotus Eregina (Chap. XIV),* and, at a later period, of Columbanus, Aidan, and Virgilius (pp. 152 to 160)—will amply repair the perusal of the students of the ecclesiastical and civil history of Ireland. Some regrets have been expressed to the editor that his late lamented friend had not continued the History of Ireland down to the present time. This was the less necessary in a work like the present, inasmuch as the History of Ireland has been merged into that of England since the Norman conquest. Besides, the difficulties arising from partisan opinions become more intense in proportion as we advance towards our own times. For the rest, the author might well have felt like the ancient historian of Rome: "*Et legentium plerisque, haud dubito, prima origines proximaque originibus minus præbitura voluptatis sint, festinantibus ad hæc nova.* * * * * *Ego, contra, hoc quoque laboris præmium petam, ut me a conspectu malorum, quæ nostra tot per annos vidit ætas, tantisper certe dum prisca illa tota mente repeto, avertam."†

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* Vide Hallam's Middle Ages, Vol. II., p. 322, Note 2, Paris edition. Also "Literature of Europe," Vol. I., p. 70, same edition

† Tit. Livii. Histor. Prefatio.

HISTORY OF IRELAND.

CHAPTER I.

Origin, Manners, and Customs of the Ethnic Irish.

To what precise point in the scale of chronology we are to refer the time when Ireland first received its inhabitants, can never be determined with any degree of certainty; but it is admitted that a succession of colonists of different origin arrived at a very early period and formed settlements in the island, though it is difficult to ascertain whence they came, and the order in which they respectively appeared.

From the uniform traditions, however, of the people themselves, we learn that the principal and most important inhabitants of Ireland, in early times, were descendants of a colony from Celtic Spain; that these were either preceded, or more probably followed, by another of the Belgæ, denominated, in the early history of the country, Firbolgs, who might have come either from Britain or immediately from Gaul; that, in addition to these, the Danaans, or, as they were Latinized, the Damnonii, together with a variety of other colonists from the northern parts of Europe, who were called by various names,* settled in the island at

* The Irish called them *Fomharaigh* or foreigners, and their country *Fomoire*. For their probable origin, see *O'Flaherty's Ogyg, p.* 303.

different times, and who, having been descended from the great Scythian swarm, gave the name of Scuits or Scots to the inhabitants of the country at a comparatively modern period;* and hence the island was afterwards called Scotia.

Perhaps this diversity of race, taken in connexion with the subsequent ramifications into which the families of different chieftains naturally extended themselves, may in some measure account for the incredible number of kingdoms into which the island was divided at a very early period. This practice, however, of multiplying regal districts was not peculiar to Ireland, but seems to have been prevalent in most countries in the infancy of society. There were no less than ten kings in Thessaly, according to Homer, at the time of the Trojan war; six, in Peloponnesus; and almost every portion of ancient Greece was parcelled out into regal districts. It is therefore by no means surprising that so many of the petty toparchs of Ireland assumed the title of kings, notwithstanding the very limited nature of their respective territories. The province of Munster alone contained in it, at one time, no less than eighteen kingdoms. Six of these were in the present county of Cork; four, in the county of Limerick; and the remaining eight, in Kerry, Waterford, Ossory, and part of Tipperary.†

The princes who governed these regal districts respectively were all subject to the Ard-Righ, or provincial dynast of Munster; for, besides the arrangement to which we have now adverted, the whole island was divided into five prov-

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* See Littleton's Hen. II, Vol. III, pp. 15, 16, Dub. ed.
† Ledwich's Antiquities of Ireland.

inces, each having a prince of its own, who was lord paramount to the *flath*, or chief, of every sept within his province; whilst a monarch chosen from a particular stock,* had at least a nominal authority over the whole island.

That a monarchy was founded in Ireland, at some very remote period of its history, in which the sovereign was elective and greatly limited in his power, is admitted by every authority to which we can possibly appeal; and that it was necessary he should be chosen from a particular family, is in accordance with all the traditions of the Irish nation. The same rule was followed in making choice of the provincial dynasts, and even of the flath or chief of every sept.

In the election and inauguration of the monarch, great care was taken to ascertain that he was of pure Milesian extraction. After his election was declared, and before the ceremony of inauguration was performed, the chief *senachie*, or antiquarian, stepped forward, and having bent his knee to the monarch elect, proclaimed aloud to the people his genealogy, through every successive generation, in a long catalogue of names, most of them real, but others perhaps fictitious, up to Milesius himself. The king was then placed upon a stone, which commonly stood upon a hill,†

* By the law of Tanistry the person elected was to be the oldest or worthiest of the family; and this rule was followed by the Germans, Saxons, Swedes, and Norwegians, at the very earliest stages of their history.—*See Pink. Scot., Vol. I, p.* 261.

† Some of the stones used for this purpose bore the impress of a foot, supposed to be the measure of that of their first monarch or chief, as the case may be.—*See Spenser's View of the State of Ireland.*

and there took a solemn oath to observe and maintain the old laws and customs of the country. A white wand was then presented to him by a proper officer as a badge of his authority; and, bearing this in his hand, he descended from the stone, and turned himself round thrice forward and thrice backward.

In order also that a due provision should be made for the exercise of sovereign authority, without any interruption from faction or intrigue, a successor called the *Roydamna* * was appointed to the monarch during his lifetime, who, on his demise, was to assume the functions of his predecessor, and exercise the power and authority of the supreme ruler of the island.

It would be impossible, at a period which does not come within the limits of authentic history, to trace with accuracy the origin and progress of the Irish monarchy. The well-known annalist of Clonmacnoise, who lived in the eleventh century, and whose character stands high for faithfulness and veracity, pronounces all the records of the Irish uncertain before the reign of Kimbaoth, the founder of the palace of Eamania in the province of Ulster.†

From this prince there is a formidable host of monarchs given us by the bardic historians; but to account for this, it is only necessary to remember the number of kings of different grades for which Ireland was remarkable during the earlier portion of its history. From such a profusion therefore of royal materials a facility was afforded to the

* See O'Con. Dissert., note p. 48.

† "Omnia monumenta Scotorum usque Cimbaoth incerta erant."—Tigernach, the annalist, died in the year 1088.—*See Ware's Writers.*

bards, as well as a strong temptation, to fabricate their list of reigning monarchs, and, without any fear of detection, to give a succession of kings to the whole island, together with a corresponding system of chronology far exceeding the bounds of credulity and truth.

Besides, if the statement be true that all these potentates had pursued each other with eagerness along the sanguinary stage of an elective monarchy;—that, by the constitution, minors being incapable of governing, no prince could become a candidate for the throne before he had arrived at the age of twenty-five;—that revolutions were also frequent; and that in a contest between two rivals for the sovereignty, the question was always decided by the sword, it must be obvious that the writer who ascribes, under all these circumstances, a reign of sixty or seventy years to some of the Irish monarchs, and asserts that one of them lived to the advanced age of one hundred and fifty, invalidates his own testimony, and renders it impossible that his authority should be taken for anything as certain, in the earlier stages of Irish history.

Were we able to give an authentic account of the accession and death of every monarch that filled the imperial throne of Ireland during the reign of Druidism, it would be found that the greater number of those princes, who got the title of monarchs, have left nothing behind them but merely their names, and most frequently the record of their premature death. They pass before us in rapid succession, like the shadow of clouds drifted over a harvest-field, but their evanescent career is marked by very few incidents of political or national importance.

Divided, indeed, as Ireland anciently was, amongst its

provincial kings and inferior toparchs, domestic feuds and a constant scene of bloodshed form some of the most prominent features of its early history; for it was impossible that its monarchy could preserve it from continual commotion and discord where so many adverse interests were constantly coming into collision, and so many rival claims were to be adjusted. The factions that were thus placed in antagonism with each other furnished at all times explosive materials enough to light up the conflagration of war at any moment. The monarchy itself was also an occasion of many violent contests; and the kings of the different provinces, claiming to have been descended from the sons of Milesius, frequently embroiled the nation in war and calamities by their unceasing efforts to obtain the sovereignty of the island, as often as the throne became vacant by the death of the reigning monarch.

The constant necessity of appearing in arms, which this state of things was calculated to induce, very naturally engendered in the Irish an ardent desire for the glories of the battlefield, as well as a considerable degree of skill in the military tactics of the age. The crantubal or sling, the sword, the javelin, and the broad-axe, were the principal weapons which they employed against an enemy, and with the use of which they appear to have become very familiar.

The military force which they usually maintained has been sometimes described by Irish writers with all the enthusiasm that such a subject was calculated to inspire. It was denominated *Fionn Eirionn*, or the Irish militia; and had probably its name from the Fins, a northern tribe of adventurers who had visited Ireland at a very early period, and who are supposed to have been the original

inhabitants of Scandinavia.* The bravery of these hardy sons of the north, as well as the duty imposed upon them of guarding the coasts from their marauding countrymen, induced the Irish to apply the word *Fene* to a military corps of any description, though it might be altogether composed of natives and without any connexion with the foreigners to whom it was originally and exclusively applied.

The Irish militia were divided into legions, and the chief commander of each province was denominated *Righ Fionn*, or king of the military, to whom they took an oath of fidelity and obedience. Some of these troops were generally employed in North Britain to assist the Picts, their allies in that country, in making inroads upon the Roman provinces in the southern division of the island; and they were hence styled, by old writers, the Fene Albyn, or Albanian legions.†

The soldiers were supported by billeting them on the country from November till May; and each house was obliged to supply one of them with certain necessaries. During the rest of the year they were employed in fishing and hunting, or in finding provisions for themselves in some other way consistent with the dignity of the military profession. Singular activity being required of each of them, the exercise of hunting was one means of preserving them in health and vigour,‡ as the red deer, then so numerous

* These Scandinavian rovers were divided into various clans, denominated Scritofins, Rerefins, Finwedi, Finwridi, and several others that retained the name of *Fin* as indicative of the country from which they had originally emigrated.—*See Led. Ant.*, *p.* 16.

† O'Hal. Hist., Vol. II, B. VI, Chap. III.

‡ "No people in the world pursued the pleasures of the chase with so much avidity as the Irish nation in general."—*O'Con. Dissert.*, *p.* 111.

in the Irish mountains, were sufficiently large and fleet to give full scope to all their energies. The rules which are said to have been laid down for the regulation of this military force may possibly have been invented by the bards in more modern times, but doubtless they were well disciplined according to the custom of the age, were good soldiers, and in courage and activity were not inferior to the military of any other nation in Europe at the time.

It is also stated, that, by the Milesian constitution, the people were divided, at a very early period, into different classes, distinguished by the number of colours in their garments. The remains of this species of apparel are still preserved in the plaid worn by their descendants in the Highlands of North Britain. The law by which each grade in society had its number of colours adjusted was called by the Irish *Ilbreachta*, and has been observed from the most remote antiquity by several of the oriental nations.*

Except the distinctive colours worn by these different classes, there was a considerable similarity in dress between the higher and lower ranks of society. Its fashion, as appears from the carvings on some of the tombs of ancient warriors, was so admirably suited to the habits of a people who were often in the battlefield, that it underwent very little change during the lapse of ages, but was transmitted without much variation by one generation to another. It was such as admitted of great freedom of action on the part of the wearer, as well as exhibited his appearance to the greatest possible advantage. One portion of it was fitted closely to the legs and thighs; whilst the piece annexed to

* O'Hal. Hist., B. III, Chap. V.

it, called the *Braccon*,* was so contrived as to cover and protect the breast, much better than any article of the kind designed for the same use in modern times. The close sleeves also gave the wearer the full use of his arms without any impediment; and the *Bared*, or covering of the head, was made of the same material, and rose conically like the cap worn in more modern times by a grenadier. A wide cloak, called a *Fallung*, which was put on over the whole, was also sometimes used as a bed, in the *long*, or field-tent, which was pitched in the time of war, or in hunting expeditions.

The Celtes, or woodlanders, as their name is supposed to intimate,† generally took up their residence in forests, and never made use of fortified towns for their defence, or even of permanent edifices for their own accommodation. They were in the habit, however, in Ireland of impaling occasionally their *Longpharts*, or camps, to prevent surprise; and this temporary habitation they called a *Dun*. It was made up of thick ditches of earth, impaled with wooden stakes, and surrounded with a deep trench. The area within the dun they raised high, that they might annoy an attacking enemy with the greater advantage. These duns were in general but small, and suited only for the defence of a few

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* The word *brac*, in Celtic, signifying anything speckled or partly coloured, it is probable that this article of dress had its name from the ornamental materials of which it was composed.

† The learned Joseph Mede takes the Celtes to have been a colony of the Cimmerians who settled in ancient Gaul, and were called by the Greeks Γαλαται, which was contracted afterwards into Κελται, and that hence the Celtes had their name.—*See Mede's Works, p.* 383.

persons, who might maintain their post, or fly from it, as occasion might require. The remains of many of these forts are still to be seen in every part of the island. The peasantry ascribe them to their ancient invaders the Danes, and by the superstitious they are supposed to be the peculiar haunts of fairies. They furnish therefore many of the legendary traditions of the country with some of their most prominent points of interest.

The wars which the Irish chieftains were continually waging with each other, were happily of short duration, and generally ended in one decisive engagement. During a protracted campaign it frequently happens that more men are sacrificed by disease than by the sword; and that the laurel is as often withered on the hero's brow by the pestilential blast of contagion, as torn from it by the nervous arm of strength; but this was seldom the case in Irish warfare. We have instances, however, of some battles which lasted several days before the victory was decided; and, from the beginning to the end of the history of the nation, we have scarcely one instance of any monarch surviving the loss of his diadem.*

The characteristic temperament of the Irish, which has ever been considerably mercurial, impelled the different parties in these wars to permit their passions to break forth into full and terrific operation. All the enthusiasm of the Celtic race, on some occasions, rushed like an electric current along the arteries and nerves of both princes and people, and the most sanguinary contests were the necessary result. The circumscribed limits of a province, or the ter-

* O'Con, Dissert. on Irish History.

ritorial possessions of an inferior toparch, probably confined the rage of the belligerent parties to a very contracted circle; and hence, the enmity which was generated by the collision of petty interests most frequently assumed the utmost virulence of personal animosity. Accustomed to act under the immediate impulse of their own wishes, some of the Irish princes, like the stubborn oak, which disdains to bend and is dashed headlong to the ground by the impetuosity of the storm, brought certain and immediate destruction upon themselves; whilst a few others, possessing more policy and discretion, contrived to accomplish their respective objects by measures that were of a more political and less sanguinary nature.

But whilst the martial genius and institutions of the ancient Irish make the most conspicuous figure in their early history, their civil policy, as far as it can now be known, is not without its share of interest and instruction. It is to be regretted, however, that our knowledge of this subject is necessarily so limited, as only a few fragments of the Brehon laws, by which the people were governed, have come down to our time; and it is now impossible to determine, with any degree of certainty, the different periods at which they were enacted. The person who administered those laws was called a Breathamh, or Brehon. He sat on the summit of a hill, or on its acclivity, to hear causes; and exercised a discretional power in his decisions on every subject. One of these ancient seats of judgment, occupied by this functionary, is still to be seen on the hill of Kyle in the Barony of Ossary and Queen's county. It is very near the top of the hill, on the side next the east, is formed from

the solid rock, and is commonly called by the peasantry "the fairy chair." *

One remarkable law which the Brehons adopted in their general practice, is that which relates to the *eric*, or fine, which was to be exacted from criminals for different offences. By this law, which was similar to that which was acted upon by the ancient Britons and Saxons † also, as well as by various other nations of Europe, a composition was accepted for every crime, except the forcible violation of female chastity, or an aggressive assault committed at Tara, during the session of a general convention.

When murder or any uncommon outrage was committed, the friends and relatives of the guilty party were taxed; but when the criminal was obscure or unable to pay the fine required, it was raised upon the community at large. When the prince himself, however, was the criminal the tax was laid upon his dominions, inasmuch as he was considered the father of his people, who were all therefore equally related to him.

Of the commerce of Ireland, at this early period of its history, it must be confessed that our information is very imperfect. ‡ But as we find that the various exactions under the name of tribute, which one prince levied upon the subjects of another, were always paid, either in cattle or a certain weight of gold or silver, we have hence a strong presumptive evidence that the ancient Irish had no pecu-

* Led. Ant., p. 278.

† Vide Tacit. De Morib. Germ.

‡ From the testimony of Tacitus we learn that it was probably greater than that of the sister island.—"*Melius aditus portusque, per commercia et negociatores cogniti.*"—*Vit Agric., Cap. XXIV.*

niary circulating medium, such as has been sometimes ascribed to them. That the ports of Ireland were visited at an early period by the Scandinavians for the purpose of traffic, cannot be doubted; but the gold and silver that these northern traders gave to the natives for such commodities as they purchased, were not coins, but rings, necklaces, and other ornaments of a similar nature. Even the Roman money acquired by the Irish in their predatory incursions into Britain did not circulate as a medium of commerce,* but was probably manufactured into various ornaments then in use, and which have been frequently found in the bogs in Ireland, inasmuch as no Roman coins have been discovered in the island.

Little can be said respecting the agriculture of the country, in the earlier stages of its history; but, from some traces still remaining even in the greatest wilds,† it appears probable that it was carried on to a more considerable extent than is generally supposed. Whilst the wealth of the nation consisted chiefly in numerous herds of cattle, the progress of industry also produced superfluities, and these the inhabitants bartered for the commodities of the northern countries, as well as for those of Gaul, which was possessed of superior wealth.

Whilst we are thus able to take an imperfect view of some of the national characteristics of the ancient Irish, we have but little information respecting their moral and social qualities in private life. An invincible courage, contempt of death, and ardent feelings both of love and hatred, seem to have been the distinguishing features of the national character.

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* See Led. Ant., pp. 111, 132.

† O'Con. Dsisert. p. 125; O'Hal., Vol. I, p. 128.

The importance of order in their connubial alliances appears to have impressed the minds of the legislators of the ancient Irish so powerfully, that they had a court set apart for the proper adjustment of everything connected with the marriage bond, in the great Aonach, or assembly of the nation at Tara.*

It is manifest, however, that Polygamy, which was common in every heathen land, was sanctioned by the laws of this court,† and that the thorough reformation of this abuse of a divine ordinance was reserved for the influence of the Christian religion.

But, notwithstanding the care taken by the legislature to regulate the circumstances connected with the marriage contract, illegitimate children enjoyed every rank and dignity in the state to which they were entitled by blood,‡ notwithstanding the criminality of their parents, or the contempt shown by the latter for the established laws of society. Marriage indeed appears to have become a subject of legislation amongst the Ethnic Irish merely for the adjustment of the personal interests of the contracting parties; but had little effect upon their immediate issue, as it was deemed unjust that the children should be visited with pains and penalties, or even disabilities, for crimes in which they had no actual participation.

The predilection which the Irish entertained for music and poetry, above that which was evinced by most other nations, is also universally acknowledged. The nervous, pathetic, and figurative style of their language has been

* Ogyg. Domest., p. 304.
† O'Con. Dissert., p. 121.
‡ O'Hall., Vol. II, p. 171.

often admired by some of the best judges that have referred to the subject; and its singular adaptation to poetry remains a perpetual monument of the national taste; and has, no doubt, contributed to the celebrity of the Irish bards in pagan, as well as in Christian times. Every family of distinction retained a poet and a harper; and the poet's person and residence were always esteemed sacred, in the midst of all the turbulence which sometimes prevailed.*

One duty of the bard was to attend his patron in the field of battle; to animate him during the engagement; and to celebrate his exploits in poetic numbers. The ode composed on such occasions was called *Rosg-Catha*, or the eye of battle. A great number of these odes are preserved in ancient manuscripts, and are said to be not only beautiful, but animating to the highest degree. The effect may be easily conceived which they were calculated to produce on the minds of ambitious and imperfectly civilized chieftains when engaged with an enemy; and the veneration in which this order of men were universally held by the people was almost without precedent in any other country.

Nor was it merely in the time of war that the services of the bard were required by his patron, but the funeral obsequies could not be properly performed without his aid. It was the peculiar office of the bard to compose the funeral dirge, which was chanted by a chorus of minstrels who were retained for such services. The heroism of the departed, and his supposed virtues, were celebrated in affecting strains; whilst the solemnity of the procession to the last resting-place of the defunct could not fail to produce an extensive effect upon the minds of the spectators.

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* MacPhers. Crit. Dissert., Dis. XIX.

No custom appears to have been more ancient than a systematic wailing over the remains of the departed, as we find it practised by the Hebrews, the Greeks, and the Romans, in every stage of their history. But the Irish have been more tenacious of the practice than any other people; and the female chorus is continued to the present day over the dead; but sometimes so debased by discordant tones, as well as by the extemporaneous effusions of ignorant and illiterate performers, that there is but little similarity between the present custom and the original institution.

The regulation of the different modes of interment amongst the Irish is ascribed to the monarch Eochy X, surnamed *Of the Grave.** He directed, it is said, that the head be placed to the west, the feet to the east, and a *leacht*, or monument of stone, raised over the whole.

Some of the nobility had graves dug, the bottom of which was of smooth marble, the sides built with brick and cement, in the form of a modern coffin, and finished with such ingenuity at the top, that a large stone fitted it so exactly as to leave no room for the entrance of dust or any other adventitious substances. In this the corpse was laid, with his armour on, and his sword by his side; and inscriptions were raised round the moulding of the coffins, some of which may be still seen, after the lapse of so many ages, exhibiting, by the beauty of the letters, the artistic skill of the sculptors of a period so remote.

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* O'Hal., Vol. II, p. 168.

CHAPTER II.

Religion of the Ethnic Irish.

It is probable that the ancestors of the original inhabitants of Ireland at first received the principles of their religion from the Phœnicians in Spain; which may account for the obvious orientalism of many of its peculiarities. Subsequent colonists, however, from the north of Europe,* may have introduced, at different times, customs amongst them, which, having some affinity with those already prevalent in the island, were very easily engrafted on the existing creed.

Descended as the original Irish were from that Celtic stock, which, at a period not now reducible to any precise point in chronology, supplied Gaul, Britain, and Spain with their original population, it is to be inferred that the religion which they brought into Ireland, and which went by the general name of Druidism, was the same with that which the cognate branches of the same race professed in other parts of the west of Europe.

An ancient writer states that among the Gauls, three classes were more particularly held in veneration, the Bards, Vates, and Druids.† The Bards were not properly a

* The explanation of many of our antiquities must depend upon the customs and manners of the northern colonies being well understood.—*Pownall's Archæologia, Vol. II, p.* 250.

† Strabo, Lib. IV.

religious order, but were composers of heroic poems, celebrated the exploits of their patrons, made birthday odes, and poured forth poetic lamentations over the *manes* of the illustrious dead. The Vates assisted at the sacrifices, composed sacred poems or hymns, played upon instruments of music upon every solemn occasion, and were supposed to predict future events. The Druids were the divines and philosophers, and performed all the services of religion, except those that were peculiar to the Vates. They occupied the highest and most distinguished place amongst all the Celtic tribes; were chosen out of the best families; and the honour of their birth, joined with that of their function, procured for them the highest degree of popular veneration. They are supposed to have derived their name from their sylvan life, as well as from a superstitious veneration which they showed for the oak, which in the ancient Celtic language was called *deru;* but as they were denominated in Ireland *Draithe*, which signifies a soothsayer, or one who predicts future events,* the name by which their order is known may have originated in something different from that which is so generally supposed.

Like the scribes among the Jews, they were commonly arrayed in long garments, carried a wand in their hand as a badge of their sacred office, and wore a kind of ornament enchased in gold about their necks, called the Druid's egg. Their necks were likewise decorated with gold chains, and their hands and arms with bracelets; they wore their hair very short and their beards remarkably long.

* In the Irish version of the Bible, the magicians of Egypt are called "the Druids of Egypt" (see Exod. vii. 11); and the wise men or magi from the east in Mat. ii. 1, are denominated "the Druids from the east."

The religion of every country must always have a considerable influence on its government and political institutions; but that of the Celtic race, wherever they were found to exist, constituted one of the most essential parts of their national policy. The authority of the Druids amongst the Gauls and Britons was almost unlimited. It was not merely confined to the direction of religious duties, but extended as well to all the civil and military affairs of the nation. Their presence was necessary at the performance of every religious rite;* and it is said that "frequently during hostilities, when armies were approaching each other with swords drawn and lances extended, these men, rushing between them, put an end to their contentions, taming them as they would tame wild beasts."†

The Druids made religion also subservient to the maintenance of their power in every transaction both public and private, so that nothing could be done without their sanction; and so absolute was their authority, that magistrates and kings were only the mere creatures and obsequious instruments of their order. This irresponsible power they exercised also in the courts of justice; and whoever refused to submit to their decisions were excluded from the public services, which, on account of the consequences that followed it, was considered the greatest punishment that could be inflicted.‡

* Cæs. Comment., Lib. VI. 13.

† Diodorus Siculus, V. 31.

‡ Hæc pœna apud eos est gravissima. Quibus ita est interdictum, ii numero impiorum ac sceleratorum habentur: iis omnes decedunt, aditum eorum sermonemque defugiunt, ne quid ex contagione incommodi accipiant: neque iis petentibus jus redditur, neque honos ullus communicatur.—*Cæs. Comment. Lib. VI.* 13.

But besides the Druids, who officiated in the public services of religion, there existed amongst the Ethnic Irish an order of religious females or Druidesses, who had devoted themselves to a life of perpetual celibacy. This order of vestals seems to have been common to all those nations whose religion was of Celtic or Scytho-Celtic origin. In the northern nations of Europe these religious females were called *Alirunæ*; and it is worthy of remark, that in Irish the word *Alirunaighe* signifies a *wise person*, or one acquainted with secrets and mysteries.

There was at Tara, in the county of Meath, an establishment of these vestals, which was called Claaim-Feart, or the place of retirement until death; because the inmates never quitted the precincts of the house, from their first reception. These virgins wore a particular kind of habit; and the duty imposed upon them was to keep up constantly the sacred fire of Bel, the supreme god of the country.

With a confidence peculiar to a certain class of antiquarians, it has been frequently asserted that the Irish Druids had no letters. But this opinion is very far from being the result of either reason or an acquaintance with their history. It is true that none of the writings of the Druids of any of the Celtic nations have survived the wreck of their institutions, but this is no conclusive evidence that such writings did not exist. The policy of the Romans induced them to use every means in their power to obliterate any vestige that might happen to remain of the former state of those whom they had conquered, and this might account for the absence of Druidical writings in Gaul and Britain. With regard to the Irish priests of that order, we learn from the uniform testimony of St. Patrick's biographers,

that the zeal of that missionary and his colleagues destroyed about one hundred and eighty Druidical tracts in one day.

Cæsar, who wrote from his own knowledge of the Druids of Gaul, expressly states that they not only possessed letters, but that they employed them for every purpose both public and private, except in recording their religious mysteries, which they deemed too sacred to be committed to writing.* They also instructed, he says, their disciples in the motion of the science of the stars and the magnitude of the earth, which most manifestly implied that they possessed some skill in astronomy. The same writer informs us, that such of the Gauls as wished to study diligently the doctrines of Druidism repaired to Britain for that purpose, which country, he intimates, was the prime seat of this ancient system of superstition.

As Ireland was styled by the ancient geographers, one of the British isles,† it is highly probable that it was the country to which the Gauls resorted to receive that instruction of which Cæsar speaks. But whether this supposition be well founded or not, the fact mentioned by this Roman writer ought to be sufficient evidence that their instructors, at least, could not have been ignorant of some kind of alphabetic writing. There is however no theory, how baseless soever it may be, that the caprices of talent will not be able to embellish, in order to accommodate the very best authenticated facts to its own visionary speculations.

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* Comment., Lib. VI. 14.

† Thus Ptolemy the geographer, *The British islands are two; one called Albion, the other Ierne.* Eustatius, the Greek interpreter of Dionysius, says, *there are two British Islands, Ouernia and Allowin, or Birnia and Albion.*" O'Hal. Vol. I, p. 22.—*See also Camden's Britannia.*

The distinguished place which the ancient Irish held for learning and literary acquirements, immediately after the introduction of Christianity amongst them, affords a strong presumptive evidence that they were not altogether an illiterate people *before* that important event. Besides, had the use of letters been first introduced among them by Christian missionaries, as some have supposed, it is plain that it must have been those that were used by the Latins which they taught them. But it is evident, that the order, structure, number, and names of the Irish characters differed widely from those of the Roman alphabet. The Irish letters were originally arranged in an order peculiar to themselves,* beginning with the consonants and having the vowels placed at the end. They were but seventeen in number, whilst the Roman alphabet contained twenty-four; and they were denominated in such a way as to prove their want of affinity with those that the Latins had in use in any period of their history.

The Irish themselves, with real Celtic pertinacity, even in writing Latin words, after the Roman alphabet had been introduced among them, refused to employ any character of that alphabet which was not to be found in their own Beth-luis-nion. For instance, whenever the letter *X* occured, instead of using it they employed *gs* or *cs* as a substitute, for no other reason but because it did not exist in their own primitive alphabet.†

Nor could it be reasonably supposed that the system of

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* "It follows therefore, that, as there was no prototype to copy them from, they must be original."—*Harris on Ware, Chap. III.*

† See Literature of the Irish after their conversion to Christianity. Collect. No. 5.

philosophy which was taught by the Irish in the middle ages, was introduced into their country by their first evangelical instructors, as it was widely different from that which was then prevalent in any of the Christian nations of Europe. It is admitted that the Irish in the seventh and eighth centuries maintained the doctrine of the plurality of worlds, of the earth's rotundity, and consequently that every place had its antipodes;* and this system of philosophy, it is well known, was pronounced to be heretical by the highest dignitaries of the Latin church at the time. In fact so far were the first preachers of Christianity in Ireland from introducing such sentiments amongst their converts, that, we are told, they destroyed all the Druidical writings on physics and astronomy, as well as on religion, of which they could get possession; judging them to be repugnant to the principles of that faith which it was the object of their mission to propagate.

It is a well-ascertained fact, that during the existence of Druidism the science of astronomy was cultivated with far greater zeal in Ireland than in any other nation in the western parts of the world. The Gauls had then no measure for their annual festivals but the lunations or revolutions of the moon; but this was not the case with the Irish, as by the intervention of intercalary days they made some attempt, though now confessedly imperfect, at reconciling the difference between the lunar and solar year. This is evident from the order of their annual festivals, as well as from the words in the Irish language signifying a year, the zodiac, and the solstitial points.† Nothing therefore could

* See O'Hal., Vol. I, p. 93.

† The year was called by the Irish, *Bliadhan*, or *Bel-ain*, which

be more preposterous than to suppose that the Druids, who were in that age the teachers of philosophy as well as of religion, were destitute of letters or of alphabetic writing.

As men may be frequently observed to preserve the original elements of their character amidst great external changes, it is not difficult to detect the Eastern origin of many of the customs and institutions which existed for so many ages amongst this ancient people. When their religion is examined through that mist which must still continue to hang over institutions so remote, it will be found in its main principles to have sprung from that region, but to be deeply imbued with many of the superstitions of the northern nations of Europe. The sun, the moon, and the stars, or the host of heaven, were the principal objects of their religious worship; but, like other pagan nations, they had besides these, inferior deities whose power was confined to the mountain or valley, the river or lake, that was supposed to be their peculiar domain.

The festival of Bel, or the Sun, called Bel-tinne, was celebrated annually by fires and other public rejoicings. The names of many places in Ireland, as must be known to every one acquainted with Irish topography, still preserve a memorial of this ancient system of superstition; as all the compounds of *Grian* or of *Bel* are names of this description, and remind us of the practice of the aborigines with respect to the primary object of their religious worship.

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signifies *the circle of the sun*. *Ratha*, which is Irish for *a quarter of a year*, radically signifies *the arch of a circle*. *The zodiac* was denominated *Beach-Grian*, or the revolution of the sun; and the *solstices* were called *Grianstad*, or the sun's stopping-places.—*Vide O'Brien sub vocibus.*

It was usual, at the festival of Bel, for the priests to light up the holy fire, and all culinary fires were to be extinguished until this was kindled.* We have no means of ascertaining in what manner the sacred fire was lighted in Ireland; but the Scandinavians and North Britons differed in the mode in which it was excited. Among the latter, planks were rubbed together until the friction caused them to blaze;† but the former employed flints, which are still to to be found about the old altars in the northern countries of Europe.

The adoration of fire seems to have been engendered by the worship of the sun, and held a prominent place in the religious system of the ancient Irish. It is probable that those round-towers which are so numerous in Ireland, and are to be found in every section of the island, were originally connected with this department of religious worship. Their height varies from eighty to one hundred and twenty feet, and they are uniformly of the same construction, having a door about twelve or sixteen feet from the ground, and four openings at the top directed to the cardinal points of the heavens. They are all circular, and to a spectator, who enters one of them, it presents the appearance of a huge gigantic chimney; but their history stands so far back within the thickening shades of antiquity that it is impossible to determine at what period of time they were erected.

This subject has been so perplexed by the conflicting speculations of modern antiquaries, that little room is left for anything satisfactory upon it. That these towers were built by the Danes in the ninth century, as some have

* Usser., p. 849; Walsh's Pros., p. 430.

† Martin's West. Islands, p. 113; Led. Ant., p. 387.

asserted,* appears highly improbable. For had this been the case, it is certain that some tradition of the fact would have been handed down to posterity. But no such tradition can be discovered by the microscopic eye of the most zealous antiquarian.

There are some peculiarities, however, connected with these buildings which are worthy of notice; and which, amidst the obscurity that confessedly surrounds them, might have a tendency, if not to cast some light upon their origin and real use, yet to prove that they could not have been erected by the Scandinavian invaders who so long infested the British islands.

In the first place, as far as Europe is concerned, they are altogether peculiar to Ireland. But had they been the work of the northern invaders of the island, this could not possibly have been the case. There would have been some vestige of such buildings either in Scandinavia itself, or in some of those other countries which were infested by the Danes at the same time; but no such discovery has hitherto been made. Besides, even in Ireland itself, in some of the principal settlements of the Danes, these singular edifices are not to be found; whilst in other places that were never possessed by the Northmen, they still stand as striking monuments of a much more ancient age than that in which the Danish invasion took place.

Another peculiarity of these towers is, that, however they may differ in size and locality, they have uniformly the same shape, and are obviously constructed on the same principle. Similar buildings have been discovered by modern

* Led. Ant., pp. 284–300.

travellers in Persia, India, and several other regions of the east,* but are not to be found in any of the modern countries in Europe.

Without therefore entering into any of the various and conflicting theories started by antiquarians on this subject, the most probable conjecture is, that these towers were appropriated by the Irish to some use similar to that of those Persian temples in which the inextinguishable fire was preserved. This opinion will be found strengthened by observing, that, as the sacred fire was to be kept from every kind of pollution of man and beast, the entrance to these towers is raised to such a height as rendered the access to them difficult, and secured them the more effectually from such pollution as might arise from accident or any other cause.

It is admitted that some of the first Christian missionaries, in order to enlist the prejudices of their converts in their favour, generally converted those places which had been esteemed holy in pagan times to the purposes of religious worship under the gospel. Hence to these fire-temples was subsequently appended a wooden church, and the towers themselves were employed as belfries.† This will also account for their having been called "ecclesiastical towers," at a more recent period,‡ as well as for the crosses upon the caps of many of them, and Christian symbols in the body of the structure of others; as these are mani-

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* See Hanway's Travels into Persia, Vol. I, and Lord Valencia's Voyages and Travels, Vol. II.

† In consequence of this accommodated use, the towers were called in Irish, *Cloch-theachs*, or bell-houses; *cloc* or *clog* signifying a *bell*, and *theach*, a house.—*Walsh's Pros.*, *p.* 417.

‡ Cambrens, Topog., p. 720.

festly of a more modern date than the respective towers themselves.

The adoration of fire gave rise to certain periodical purifications which were performed, during the annual festivals of the Irish, by causing both men and cattle to pass between two fires as a preservative against future accidents; and this custom is still observed by many of the lower classes of the people as a means of guarding their cattle from witchcraft, the influence of an evil eye, or the power which the fairies are generally supposed to exercise.

Before the introduction of foreign usages into the ancient religion of the Irish, their rites were comparatively simple but after they had lost that simplicity, probably through the influence of later colonists, human victims were offered upon particular occasions.* These were generally criminals that had been condemned to death by the Druids, at their usual seat of judgment on mount Uisneach in the preceding spring, or else some of their enemies that had been taken captive in the time of war; but when such could not be had, the innocent, and even young children, were frequently sacrificed in their place.

The plain of Breffni, which is in that district now called the county of Leitrim, was named Magh-Sleacth, or the *field of slaughter*, because it was the scene of these horrors at a very early period. In that place, during the festival of Samhain, or the host of heaven, the same dreadful tribute which some of the eastern nations are known to have paid

* Cæsar informs us, that the ancient Gauls practiced human sacrifices on this very remarkable principle, *Quod, pro vitâ hominis nisi vita hominis reddatur, non posse aliter deorum immortalium numen placari arbitrantur.—Comment., Lib. VI, sect.* 16.

to Moloch,* in sacrificing to him their first-born children, was by the Irish offered up to their chief idol, called Crom-Cruach, or black Crom. To this deity there were supposed to be subordinate certain genii, or fairies, that were called Sidhe, and were said to inhabit pleasant hills; † and in the same class a well known antiquarian places the *Ban-sidhe* or Banshee,—"a young demon," he says, "supposed to attend each family, and to give notice of the death of a relation to persons at a distance." ‡

The frightful image of this monstrous divinity, whose head was of gold, stood surrounded by twelve smaller idols,§ representing, it is most probable, the twelve signs of the zodiac; as the connexion of the worship of the sun with the science of astronomy was maintained in every country in which that superstition prevailed.

Tighernmas, the monarch who erected this famous idol, it is said, having been attending a sacrifice on the eve of Samhain, was killed, with most of his attendants, by a stroke of lightning, in a thunderstorm which occurred at the time.

Similar to the religious adoration of fire was that which was generally paid to water. Besides the information derived from traditional testimony, the sacred fountain and holy well, which are still frequented in many parts of Ireland, bear ample testimony to this fact, and show with what pertinacity the descendants of the Celtes still cling to their ancient customs. We are told of a certain Druid, or *magus*,

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*See Rollin's account of the Carthaginian Religion in his *Ancient History*, Vol. II.

† Lanigan's Eccles. His. of Ireland, Vol. I, Chap. V.

‡ Valiancey's Vind. of Ancient History.

§ Jocelyn, Vit. S. Patricii, cap. 56.

as he is called, who regarded water alone as an object of religious worship, and considered fire to be an evil genius.* Hence, it is added, that, at his own request, he was buried under a stone in a particular well, in the county of Mayo, which had been long venerated by the people and called by them "the king of the waters."

The worship of the moon, under the sacred name of *Re*, was nearly connected with that of the sun, and was practised to a similar extent amongst the ancient Irish. Golden ornaments in the form of a crescent, that, with good reason, are thought to have been employed in the worship of that luminary, have been frequently found in the bogs in Ireland. On the sixth day of the moon the Druids were accustomed to celebrate the ceremony of cropping the mistletoe; and as these ornaments are generally of such a size as to represent the moon at that age, it is supposed that they were carried by those priests in the performance of such ceremonies as were usual on that occasion.

The mistletoe is a plant of the *genus viscum*, which grows upon the oak, and is probably propagated by the agency of birds. It produces a berry which contains a glutinous substance, and preternatural qualities were ascribed to the plant by the Celtic tribes in general. It is probable that the ceremony of cropping this plant was conducted by the Irish Druids in the same manner as it was by their brethren in Gaul and Britain, of which we have a circumstantial account given us by Pliny in his Natural History.† Two white bulls were taken, and their horns having been tied for the

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* Lanigan's Eccles. His., Vol. I, Chap. V.
† Plin. Nat. Hist., XVI. 95.

first time, they were brought under the venerated oak on which that plant grew. One of the Druids then climbed the tree, and with a golden knife pruned off the plant, to receive which another Druid was prepared at the foot of the tree with a white woollen cloth. They then sacrificed the white bulls, and entreated the gods for their heavenly benediction. While performing all these ceremonies, they wore a white surplice, which they used in all the services of religion.

From the sanctity of the oak, everything near which it grew was esteemed holy; and therefore a multitude of holy places, wells, lakes, caves, and groves, were to be found in every part of the country.

In order to prevent any person from entering between the trees of a consecrated grove, it was fenced round with stones, and the passages which were left open were guarded by some inferior Druids, lest any stranger should intrude into their mysteries. These groves were of different forms, but generally quite circular. Within these circles were several smaller ones, surrounded with large stones; and near the centre of these smaller circles were stones of a prodigious size, some of which were obviously altars, whilst others may have answered the purpose of such ritual observances as were prescribed in their religious ceremonies. Some of these stones are still remaining, not only in Ireland, but in England, Wales, and the island of Anglesey; and are of such an amazing magnitude, that it has been superstitiously thought that the demons who were supposed to attend upon that manner of worship, must have assisted in bringing and rearing them, as no mechanical power which

was then in use is thought to have been equal to the accomplishment of the task.*

These monuments of antiquity, which are generally denominated "Druidical circles," were manifestly, in the primary object of their erection, designed to be temples for sacred uses. But from the light thrown upon this subject by some eminent writers in modern times, it is plain that they were used when necessary for civil, military, and judicial purposes. We may however easily account for this by remembering, that, under the ancient systems of religion, the sacerdotal, legislative, and judicial functions were vested in the same persons; and that it was natural for the priests, who were also the legislators and the judges, to avail themselves of the advantage of connecting and associating their civil and judicial acts with such particular places as were of all others deemed by the populace to be most holy.†

The Cromlechs are perhaps the most common of all Celtic monuments, as they are to be found, not only in several parts of Europe, but also in the east, and in the very region of the Phœnicians themselves. They are large stones placed in the fashion of a table, but in an inclining position, generally upon three smaller ones, as it was found easier to place and fix securely an incumbent weight on three supporters than on four or more.‡

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* That these ponderous stones were brought from a great distance, how unaccountable soever it may appear, by human hands, cannot be called in question. "The Goths," says Mallet, "whose bodily strength was all their riches, showed their zeal by rolling enormous rocks to the summits of hills."—*Northern Antiquities.*

† See Kitto's notes to his Hist. of Palest., Vol. I, pp. 404, 428.

‡ Borlase's Antiquities of Cornwall.

The name of Cromlech signifies *an inclining stone*,* according to some British antiquarians, but has a different meaning attached to it by the Irish.† Such tabular rocks are sometimes found isolated, but more usually in the centre of a Druidical circle, or in some way connected with it. Some have thought them to be sepulchral monuments, because human remains, ashes, and bones have been frequently found under them; but as it is admitted that the Druids were in the habit of offering human sacrifices, these discoveries might with as much propriety indicate that they were altars, as that they were the ordinary receptacles of the dead. Besides, as many of them stand on the solid and unbroken rock, they must at once appear to be unsuited to sepulchres.

The general use of sacred stones, in the ritual of the Druidical religion, is one of those numerous indications that we have of its eastern origin; but the sepulchral monuments of the Irish appear to have passed from that region to them, not directly, like many of their other rites, but through the northern nations of Europe.‡ One use, however, that was made of particular stones was, that either *at* them or *on* them the princes and chiefs of this race were generally inaugurated.§ Indeed a marked instance of this

* From the British words *crum*, *bowed or inclined*, and *llech*, *a broad flat stone*.

† See O'Connor's Dissertations on the Hist. of Ireland, p. 98.

‡ The mode of burial and the species of sepulchral monument at New Grange may be traced through Denmark, Sweden, Russia, Poland, and the Steppes of Tartary.—*Pownall's Archæologia, Vol. II*, p. 250.

§ Spencer's View of Ireland.

use of a stone is evinced in the case of that which was called in Ireland *Lia-fail*, but which has been Latinized into *saxum fatale*, or the *stone of destiny*,* which was once held in such veneration by the Christian princes of the reigning families, as well as by their pagan ancestors. Both these classes of rulers seem to have considered it as the palladium of their empire, and to have supposed that their dynasty was secure as long as they could keep possession of it. This stone was probably kept at Tara, where the Irish monarchs were elected and inaugurated. It was customary with the candidates for the throne to sit over this oracle in the sanctuary in which it was placed; and by some contrivance of the Druids, such sounds were emitted as pronounced the destiny of the person incumbent.

At what time this oracular relic was removed to Scotland cannot now be determined with certainty. Mr. O'Flaherty thought that it was sent thither by Hugh Finliath, the son-in-law of Kenneth MacAlpine, to assure him of the subjection of the Picts,† whom he had conquered some years before. It was kept with the greatest veneration at the abbey of Scone, the royal seat of the Pictish and subsequently of the Scottish kings; until Edward I of England had it removed, in the year 1300, to Westminster, where, it is said, it still lies under the coronation-chair. It is commonly called Jacob's stone, from a notion that has prevailed that it was a fragment of that which Jacob used as a pillow upon the first night of his flight from Beersheba to Padanaram.

Notwithstanding that the Irish Druids are not supposed to have possessed at any time that unlimited authority which

* See O'Connor's Dissert. on the History of Ireland, p. 103.
† Ogyg, p. 45; O'Con. Dissert. p. 104.

their brethren exercised amongst the Gauls, yet the progress of events for ages had a tendency to increase their power to such an extent, that some enlightened men of the first rank sometimes endeavoured to check their encroachments. Conla, a *brehon*, in the province of Connaught, appeared a zealous and persevering opponent of their superstitions, as well as of that arbitrary power at which they were continually grasping. Cormac O'Cuinn also carried on a controversy with them in favour of theism, or the unity of the divine essence; whilst several of the *filea*, taking part in the contest, proposed new schemes of truth, and were equally zealous for some favourite hypothesis. The great body of the people, however, took no part in this polemical warfare; but the spirit of inquiry that was thereby engendered had a good effect, as it prepared men's minds for the reception of the Gospel when it was afterwards preached to them by Christian missionaries.

CHAPTER III.

The Irish Monarchy anterior to the mission of St. Patrick.

It is more than probable that the leaders of some of the first settlers in Ireland were two chieftains named Heber and Heremon, of the family of a Spanish adventurer, whose real name was Gollamh, but who was called by his descendants Mile-Espagne, or the Spanish soldier, Latinized afterwards into Milesius.

An indistinct tradition of the history of these chieftains, had no doubt, reached the bards of later ages and formed the groundwork of some of their fanciful amplifications. But, admitting as we do, their real existence, in some age too remote to come within the range of any authentic record, we are altogether unable to determine the precise period of their arrival on the Irish coasts. Amongst their successors, however, there were some great men, even in the darkest periods of heathen superstition, whose actions and institutions made a permanent impression on the affairs of the nation, and whose foot-prints upon the sands of time have been so obvious, that neither the lapse of ages, nor the inauspicious circumstances under which their names have been associated with fable, can bury their memory in perpetual oblivion, or wholly extinguish the lustre which their character appears to have shed upon the period in which they lived.

The most celebrated of the Irish kings, during this age of darkness and uncertainty, was that monarch known by the name of Ollamh Fodhla, or the Learned Doctor, under whose administration the monarchy gained a considerable degree of stability and consistency. Possessing no ordinary talents for legislation, he is said to have summoned the princes, the druids and bards, together with other great men in his dominions, to meet him at Teamor,* for the purpose of adopting such measures as might conduce to the public good. This great Fes, or convention, he rendered permanent; and decreed that it should meet triennially in the same place for the despatch of business. He is also said to have been the founder of the Mur-Ollamhan, or college of the learned, near his own residence at Tara, and which was celebrated afterwards as the principal Druidic establishment for literary purposes.

A brilliant picture is given us by the bards of the solemnity and magnificence with which the great assembly of the states was usually opened; but the colouring is too obviously taken from the usages of more modern times to comport with that simplicity which might be expected in the mere infancy of the social system. To this council an appeal was made, when any chieftain or other person was treated unjustly by his prince, or when any of the provincial kings acted contrary to the laws, or oppressed a weaker power. To Ollamh Fodhla is also attributed that ancient

* Teamor was the ancient name of Tara: which was derived from *Tea*, a house, and *mor*, signifying great or large. Probably in reference to the monarch's own residence, or from the great hall called *Moidh-Cuarta* in which the triennial *fes* was usually held.

law of Ireland by which certain offices and professions were rendered hereditary in particular families, and which national usage continued in existence to a comparatively recent period amongst the Irish people.

The uncertainty of ancient chronology leaves ample scope for a wide difference of opinion respecting the time when this monarch ascended the throne; * but the reality of his existence is fully attested by those institutions of which he was the acknowledged founder.

The reign, however, of this prince was like the course of a brilliant and rapid meteor which, shooting along the face of the midnight sky, sheds around it a glorious light, but is instantly swallowed up by the surrounding darkness. We have a long succession of kings subsequently given us; however, we can learn very little of their history, but that they all, with one or two exceptions, came to a premature end. As no regard seems to have been paid to the institutions of that philosophic monarch who had laid such a foundation for the future welfare of his people, history appears to have failed with them, and so continued, till the reign of Kimbaoth, the founder of the palace of Eamania, who is the next object that stands out from the surrounding haze. Anxious to acquire celebrity and renown, this prince is said to have raised a magnificent palace contiguous

* Some have fixed the time of Ollamh Fodhla's reign to 1300 years before the Christian era: Plowden to 950: O'Halloran to 922: O'Flaherty to between 700 and 800: O'Connor of Balenagar to about 600; whilst More says, "that the date of the dynasty itself, of which he was so distinguished an ornament, cannot, at the utmost, be removed farther back than the second century before our era."

to the site of the present city of Armagh, in his own hereditary province, from which his successors in Ulster were called kings of Eamania; and not far from this edifice was the house of Craobh-Ruadh, or the seat of the celebrated knights of the Red Branch, the equestrian order of the province.*

As the earlier portions of Irish history were delivered in verse, it but naturally followed that the heroic and marvellous had no small share in them, and truth frequently suffered by the luxuriance of poetry. The splendour of the palace of Eamania, and the exploits of the knights of the Red Branch, have therefore been triumphantly sung by many a bard, and the reign of Kimbaoth has been made an acknowledged starting point for the senachies in making their records of the transactions of those early times.

A similar picture is presented of the power both by sea and land of Hugon More, who succeeded to the monarchy about twenty seven years after the death of Kimbaoth. But without any reference to his military exploits, the civil and political effects of his accession render his name as celebrated as that of any of his successors. He had sufficient address, we are told, to prevail upon the provincial dynasts to relinquish their right of succession to the monarchy, and to take a solemn oath never to accept of a monarch but one of his own family: and to secure the more efficiently the accomplishment of his designs, he abolished the pentarchy, parcelled out the whole island into twenty-five dynasties, and thus weakened the undue preponderance of the provincial kings, who had hitherto proved the most pertinacious disturbers of the monarchy.

* O'Hal. Vol. ii, p. 74.

These improvements made by Hugony in the constitution, how arbitrarily soever they may have been effected, were attended with considerable advantage, and continued in force for several generations. This form of government however was at length reversed and the pentarchy restored by Eochy Feyloch, from what motive we cannot ascertain as no revolution was better calculated to narrow the base of monarchical power and to strengthen that of the aristocratic element.

Whatever might have been the conduct of Conary the First, had the Hugonian constitution been in force at the time of his accession,* he confirmed the provincial establishment made by Eochy Feyloch; and was in his general character a very good and benevolent prince, but in some things destitute of that wisdom which should adorn the throne of a sovereign ruler. One of the first acts of his reign, was an unjust and unexampled punishment inflicted on the people of Leinster for the murder of his father. This was, as usual in such cases, an *eric* or fine which was ordered to be paid annually from that province at his palace, and hence we may infer that his father was murdered by a party, and not killed in battle; for in the latter case no amercement of the kind could have been exacted. In revenge, however, for this injustice and severity of the monarch, his palace at Tara was soon after burned to the ground; and notwithstanding he escaped himself at the time, yet the indignation of the Lagenians continued unappeased. It is probable therefore that by this unfortunate tax his destruction was accelerated. For a desperate band of malcontents whom he had banished from the kingdom, aided by some Welshmen, and headed

* Mant. A. D. 2.

by one Hangteil, arrived suddenly in Ireland, marched directly to the royal residence at Tara, put all the inmates to the sword, and the monarch himself fell a victim to their vengeance.

It is pleasing, however, after recording such an instance of personal revenge, to be able to mark the progress of civilization amongst the people, by a measure rendered necessary through a flagrant abuse of power on the part of the literary order, and which gave to the Irish the first rudiments of that code of laws by which they were subsequently governed.

By the political constitution of the country, besides the other privileges possessed by the fileas, or literary order, they had been for ages the dispensers of laws, and the whole nation had submitted to their decisions.* But at a subsequent period, having greatly degenerated in their judicial capacity, the indignation of the people was so far roused against them in the first century, that they were obliged to seek the protection of Concovar Mac Nessa, in Ulster, as their order was threatened with total extermination.

Mac Nessa, whose heroic actions and patronage of learning made some amends to the public for great personal failings, and who felt interested in the cause of the fileas, not only afforded them a temporary protection, but employed the most eminent men he could procure to effect an extensive reformation in their order. Fochern,† assisted

* Leland's Prelim. Disc. VIII.

† While sojourning at Eamania, Fochern wrote his Book called *Uraiceacht na Neagios*, or "The precepts of the poets," containing one hundred kinds of poetical compositions. *See O'Con.* p. 132.

by Neid and Atharne of Benhedar drew up a digest of the laws * in such a manner as rendered the course of justice less obstructive afterwards, and the compilation of which they were the authors got the name of Celestial Judgments, as being supposed to proceed from a spirit of wisdom that must have been breathed from above.† By this means the fileas recovered their reputation, and the danger to which they had been exposed had a salutary effect upon their subsequent conduct.

But no reform of this nature was sufficiently efficacious to give peace and tranquillity to a nation so pregnant with the seeds of strife and contention. A new series therefore of bloodstained successions is presented by the Annalists, and the usual factions and seditions which had so long prevailed in the country, continued to harrass and distress the inhabitants to an extensive degree. In this disordered state of things, it is said that one of the petty princes of Ireland, driven from his own country by some domestic feud, addressed himself to Agricola the Roman general, who was then in Britain, and encouraged him to make a descent upon his countrymen, assuring him that a single legion, with a few auxiliaries, would suffice to conquer and retain the whole island.‡ But Agricola from what mo-

* Ogygia p. 217. Cambrens. Evers. p. 157.

† *Breatha Neimidh*, the name given to this digest is rendered by Mr. O'Reilly, "The Laws of the Nobles," instead of "Celestial Judgments:" but in this he differs from every other authority upon the subject. *See Ogyg.* p. 217. *O'Hal.* Vol. II. Book V. Chap. VI. Under the same title several codes were afterwards drawn up at different times, even so late as the eighth century. *See O'Con. Dissert.* p. 135.

‡ Tac. Vit. Agric. Cap. xxiv.

tive we cannot say, failing to avail himself of this offer, instead of dreading an invasion of his dominions by the Romans, the Irish monarch Criomthan crossed the Channel to the assistance of the Picts, led an irruption into the Roman settlements in Britain, and returned to his own country laden with the spoils of his enemies.*

But notwithstanding the partial successes of some of the Irish monarchs, the evils which necessarily resulted from an elective monarchy were always sufficient to eclipse any glory which they might have gained. Hitherto the people were perfectly satisfied that no person had ever ascended the sovereign throne but such as was ascertained to have sprung from the royal blood of Milesius. But on the death of Criomthan, a conspiracy was set on foot, and a monarch of the Danaan race for the first time usurped the sovereignty.

The ambition of the Heremonians had long embroiled the country in a continued series of wars and contentions; and had produced much dissatisfaction throughout the provinces. The civil contests which resulted from this state of things, and which was carried on for several years, has been denominated the Attacotic or plebeian war.† The

* That the Hibernian Scots took an active part in those predatory incursions made at this time upon the Roman settlements, we learn from Claudian in his poem written some centuries afterwards.

——— Totam cum Scotus Iernen
Movit et infesto spumavit remige Tethys.

† Attacots, who gave this name to the war, were a turbulent and warlike Irish tribe, who afterwards settled in Britain, and were taken into the service of the Romans at a subsequent period. *See Pinker. Enquiry, p.* iv. c. 2.

Damnonii perceiving that in every measure adopted by the predominant party, their own ruin was intented, found it expedient to league privately with the Belgæ of Leinster; and both entered into a conspiracy to counteract the influence of their common oppressors, by wresting the sovereign authority out of their hands. The time selected for the accomplishment of the design was when the princes and great men of the kingdom were assembled at Tara for the purpose of electing a successor to the deceased monarch. Having therefore made every arrangement for carrying their project into effect, the conspirators marched to Tara, slaughtered the unsuspecting Milesian chiefs, together with their followers, and proclaimed Carbry Catkean, their leader, monarch of Ireland.*

The reign of this Damnonian prince, however, lasted only four years: and, after his death, his followers elected his son Moran to succeed him; but this virtuous and unambitious patriot refused the crown thus tendered to him; and employed all his influence so effectually for the restoration of the constitutional line, that Fearadach, the son of Criomthan was called to the throne of his ancestors without any opposition.

Nor were the exertions of Moran confined merely to the restoration of the legitimate line of monarchs, but he obtained a general amnesty for past political offences, and was himself appointed chief brehon or judge, an office which his virtues had so eminently qualified him to fill.

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* Some have placed the Attacotic war in the reign of Fiacha, but by far the most reliable authorities in the present connexion. "The authority of Giolla Caombairs," says O'Halloran, "fixes me to this last opinion." *Hist. Book* v. *Chap.* iv.

Such was the popular impression respecting this great man's incorruptible integrity, that the collar which he wore around his neck was believed to possess an extraordinary virtue; and so great is the pertinacity with which the Celtic race cling to their ancient traditions, that it is still deemed a very solemn oath to swear "By the collar of Moran." It was worn by all his successors; and the people were taught to believe that whoever pronounced an unjust sentence with this round his neck, was sure to be compressed by it, in proportion to his departure from the principles of rectitude. It was also placed, it is said, about the necks of witnesses in giving their evidence; and, if so, it is probable that the apprehension which they felt of its preternatural effects was a powerful means of eliciting the truth.*

After the death of Fearadach, on whom the epithet of *Just* was bestowed, contentions broke out again, which issued in the assassination of his successor, and the usurpation of the monarchy by Elim, king of Ulster. The insurrection which brought about this revolution is that which Irish historians have denominated the second Attacotic or Plebeian war. The partizans, however, of Fiacha, the deceased monarch, invited Tuathal, his son, who had sought an asylum in North Britain on the death of his father, to return to his native land; assuring him of every assistance to restore him to the throne of his ancestors. Encouraged by this assurance, and supplied with a select body of troops by his grandfather, the Pictish king, he landed in Ireland, proceeded to Tara with such forces as

* A collar or breastplate of gold was found several years ago in a bog in the county of Limerick, which General Vallancey supposed to be that of Moran. *Collect. Hiber.*, No. 13.

he had collected, and the chiefs of his house having assembled at that place saluted him monarch with general acclamation.

In the meantime, Elim, when apprised of what had taken place at Tara, collected an army to oppose his competitor; and the rival monarch having met at Aicle, a battle was fought, A. D. 130, which terminated the dispute, as Elim was numbered amongst the slain.

Successful in this attempt against his antagonist, Tuathal, having assembled a general convention of the estates at Tara, procured the enactment of a law by which the succession to the crown was vested exclusively in his own family. The readiness with which the national council recognised the revival of the Hugonian constitution evinces how sensible they were of the evils attending on an elective form of government; but the manners and customs of the age would not admit of the establishment of a succession that was purely hereditary. Unable to abolish entirely the existing pentarchy, Tuathal had recourse to a measure which had a tendency to augment the power and influence of the monarchy, whilst it weakened those of the provincial kings. From each of the provinces governed by their respective dynasts he took a large district, and uniting these portions together, formed a noble domain which was afterwards called the "Mensal Lands of the Monarchs of Ireland."* He is also said to have established in each of these a special seat for the transaction of all affairs of importance connected with the civil and religious policy of the nation.

* *Fearon Buird Righ Erion.* O'Hal. Vol. II. p. 220.

In the temple of Tlachta, which he erected near Drogheda,* and which was sacred to Samhain, every matter relative to religion was regulated; at Uisneach, a mountain in Westmeath, whatever regarded internal commerce; at Taltion matrimonial alliances and family economy: and at Tara, the great Fes, or convention of the states, in which laws were enacted, and every affair of national importance examined and determined.

To this monarch has also been attributed the important arrangement of classifying the mechanics of the country into companies, governed by their committees, very nearly resembling the corporate institutions of modern burghs; † and he is said to have made several other regulations for the improvement of his people, and the proper discharge of the administration of justice: and, from the wise and judicious measures which he adopted, as well as from his having been the deliverer of the nation from a tyrannical usurper, he got the name of Teachtmer, or *the Acceptable.* But, notwithstanding the possession of great abilities both in a civil and military capacity, Tuathal was not secure from those troubles which sometimes spring from causes that are not suspected. Eochy, the king of Léinster, had married his eldest daughter; but, having conceived a criminal desire for the enjoyment of her sister also, he succeeded in having his wishes gratified by practising the most heartless and unprincipled imposition on her father. Both the ladies are said to have lost their lives by the transaction;

* "This sanctuary, in the county of East meath, is still remaining, being the tumulus at New Grange near Drogheda, Beauford's Ancient Topography of Ireland." O'Connor's Dissert., p.42

† Lives of Illustrious and Distinguished Irishmen. Edited by Mr. Wills. p. 39.

and the matter was laid before the national estates by the monarch. The affair however was ultimately arranged between the parties, by the imposition upon the people of Leinster of that famous tax, called the Boarian or Boromean tribute, which was to be paid every second year, and which brought so much evil upon the country for five succeeding centuries.

The reign of this monarch, which is said to have lasted thirty-four years, was one of great national prosperity: but he was slain by Mail, king of Ulster, who seized on the vacant throne, notwithstanding the constitution which had been so recently established. The usurper, however, did not long enjoy the object of his ambition, as he lost both his life and crown at the end of four years, when Feidhlim, the son of the late monarch * succeeded to the throne, and governed his people with wisdom and equity.

But the most remarkable prince of this period was Conn, the son of Feidhlim, who was surnamed Cead-Catha, or of the hundred battles, upon account of the numerous wars in which he was engaged during his reign. One of the most tedious and sanguinary contests which he carried on was that which he had with Mogha-Nuagat, better known by the name of Eogan. A dispute having arisen between Eogan and some other princes about the throne of Munster, one of the latter, named Aongus, applied to the monarch for assistance, which was readily granted. Opposed thus by a formidable force Eogan was at length obliged to quit the kingdom and to fly into Spain; but returning soon after

* "Tuathal's posterity reigned to the preaching of St. Patrick through ten lineal descents. Each son reigned, and each was interrupted in turn, by a rival, who obtained the supreme authority." *O'Con. Dissert., p.* 189.

with a number of foreigners, whom he had collected in his exile, he not only recovered Munster, but compelled Conn to make a division of Ireland with him, known, in after ages, by the names of Leath-Conn and Leath-Mogha.

Eogan, however, in less than a year, met with a signal defeat from the monarch, on the plains of Margh-Lena, in the King' County: and, in that engagement, it is said, he fell with his body pierced in a hundred places. By his death, the crown of Munster devolved upon Mac Niad, who married his antagonist's daughter, and the latter acknowledged the independence of Leath-Mogha in the most unqualified manner.

On the death of Conn, who was assassinated about two years after the battle of Lena, he was succeeded by Conary the second, a prince of the Degaid family of Munster. He was married to Seraid, the second daughter of the late monarch, and had by her three sons, called, by old writers, Carbry Muse, Carbry Baisean, and Carbry Riada,* from the different principalities which they respectively governed. His reign, however, was of short duration, as he met the fate of his predecessor, and the throne was occupied by Art, the son of the late monarch Conn.

During the administration of Conary, and on the death of Mac-Niad, the crown of Munster had devolved on Olliol Olum, the son of Eogan, a prince so celebrated, for having by his last will, been the founder of that singular law of alternate succession which disturbed the southern provinces for so many centuries. Notwithstanding his father had

* From Carbry Riada, the royal line of Scotland, and the present royal family of England, are descended. *See Dissert* pp. 205, 206.

fallen by the sword of Conn, Olliol had married the daughter of that famous warrior; at which his brother Lugha Leagha taking offence, he left the kingdom accompanied by Mac Conn, the chief brehon of Munster; but in a short time returned with a number of Welshmen, headed by Beine Briot their local chieftain, and being met by the monarch at Muicruimhe, near Athonry, a battle ensued, in which Art himself, the king of Connaught, and seven sons of Olliol Olum fell in the encounter. By the issue of this battle, Mac Conn found it easy to take possession of the vacant throne; but like most of the Irish kings, he did not enjoy that dignity long, as he was stabbed in his chariot whilst passing through Leinster to his palace at Tara, and instantly expired.

Cormac, the son of Art, who ascended the throne about A. D. 254, was a prince of great abilities, not only as a legislator, but as a philosopher of considerable acquirements. The vivid halo which the bards and senachies have cast around his character would seem to justify the most glowing eulogies that have been passed upon him by some modern writers.* He is said to have enlarged the great hall called Moidh-Cuarta, and to have founded and endowed three academies at Tara: one in which the science of war was taught: another for historical literature: and a third for the cultivation of jurisprudence. But notwithstanding the great mental powers possessed by this prince, the same fatal propensity for the effusion of human blood, that so signally marked the career of most of his predecessors, was exhibited in his conduct towards some of his subjects. His military operations were numerous, but they

* See O'Con. Dissert., p. 103. O'Hal. B. VI. Chap. ii.

were generally successful. He sent a fleet to the coast of North Britain, which gained some successes in that quarter; and he gave the army of Munster many signal overthrows. The kings of Connaught also, as well as those of Ulster, gave him some trouble; but he was able to repress their insolence, and to convince them of the superiority of his arms.

The close, however, of this monarch's reign, which lasted twenty-five years, was marked by misfortunes of various kinds and from different quarters. Instigated by evil counsellors, he made war upon the king of Munster, because the latter had refused the payment of an unjust tribute. But he was defeated, and obliged to renounce all claims upon the kings of Munster in future; to make good to the people of that province whatever losses they had sustained by his invasion; and to give hostages for the faithful performance of this covenant.

The reign of Cormac is rendered famous by the courage and legislative wisdom of his illustrious son-in-law, Finn Mac Cumhal, the general of the Irish militia; and whose great strength of body, unparalleled feats of arms, and peculiar tact in training his followers, have been sung by many a bard, and celebrated with such a degree of enthusiasm as the subject was calculated to inspire.

Cumhal, the father of this famous general, was the son of Trien-More, a descendant of the royal family of Leinster. To him Finn succeeded in the command of the militia; and his wisdom and valour soon recommended him to the attention of the monarch, who consulted him in all the affairs of importance connected with his kingdom. But from the early alliance of his history with poetry, his cha-

racter has been so much exaggerated by the bold and capricious pen of fiction, that the reality of his very existence has been sometimes called in question, and his name nearly blotted out of the pages of history as a real personage.

Whether the monarch Cormac was a convert to the Christian faith or not is a matter that we are at this period wholly unable to determine: but it is certain that he maintained the existence and superintendence of one uncreated, eternal and omnipotent Being, in opposition to the popular mythology of the time in which he lived.

It is stated, upon the best authority that we have for the transactions of those early times * that during the reign of this prince, he was engaged in no less than thirty six battles. But having had the misfortune to lose one of his eyes, in resisting a rebellious attack that was made on his palace, this blemish by an ancient law of the kingdom rendered him incapable of governing any longer; so that he was obliged to abdicate the throne; and his son, not having arrived at the age of twenty-five, was ineligible to succeed him. The estates therefore elected Eochy Gonnah, the grandson of the monarch Fergus, to fill the vacant throne.

The place of Cormac's retirement, after his resignation, was a thatched cabin at Aicle, or Kells, where he continued to support that dignity of character which he had always evinced in a public capacity. Some of his writings are still extant; amongst which is a treatise for the use of his son, † called an "Advice to a King," in which the

* Annals of Tigernach.

† "This work," says O'Halloran, "has been preserved entire in O'Duvegan's Book, a copy of which I have!" *Hist.* Book VI. Chap. ii.

duty of a king is considered as a legislator, a soldier, a statesman, and a scholar: and from its style, and the nature of its composition, it bears evident marks of an age of genuine simplicity.

A. D. 279. The accession of Carbry, surnamed Liffeycar, for whom this treatise is supposed to have been written, was interrupted only one year: and in his reign the famous battle of Gabhra was fought near Tar with Moghcarb, king of Leath Mogha. The object of this battle was probably the subjugation of the southern province to the power of the monarch; and as it was one of the most sanguinary recorded in Irish history, it has been the subject of many a romantic tale and poetical effusion at a subsequent period. From the colouring and incidents thus bestowed upon it by the bards, together with additions, amendments, and unscupulous fabrications of his own, Macpherson was afterwards able to raise that fabric of literary imposture which is contained in the poems ascribed to Ossian.

The two Fathachs, grandsons of Mac Conn, who, after the battle of Gabhra laid claim to a joint-monarchy, did not enjoy that honor a single year; and Fiacha, called Streabhthuine, the son of Carbry, succeeded to the sovereign throne.

Undismayed by the fate of several of his ancestors in making similar attempts, this monarch was resolved, on the death of Fearcorb the king of Leath Mogha, to subjugate that province to his power and authority. For this purpose he sent his son Muredach to invade Munster, whilst he encamped himself with a body of reserves, on the plains of Tara, prepared to afford his assistance when necessity required. But his brother's sons, known by the name of

the three Collas, wishing to secure, if possible, the succession to themselves, and taking advantage of the state of public affairs, collected a numerous band of followers, attacked the monarchs forces suddenly in the field, and Fiacha himself fell a victim to their treachery in the thirtieth year of his reign.

As Muredach was absent in the south at the time of his father's death, Colla Uas the eldest of the brothers, succeeded in having himself seated on the sovereign throne. But when the former was apprised of what had happened, he immediately repaired to Tara in order to assert his right to the monarchy. He found it, however, more prudent to enter upon negociations with his rival; and on condition of his relinquishing every claim to the throne, the latter promised to assist him in seizing upon the crown of Connaught. as the Danaan power was sinking apace in that province, But, notwithstanding this design was carried into effect, it appears that about four years afterwards, the son of Fiacha was called to the throne, whether by the death or expulsion of the reigning monarch is uncertain.

Dreading the resentment of the new sovereign, the two brothers of Colla Uas fled to the court of their uncle, the king of the Picts; and at length, through the influence of that prince, a pardon was granted them by the Irish monarch. Muredach, not only received them again graciously at Tara, but as their former possessions had been alienated, upon account of their rebellion, he laid a plan for their acquisition of a considerable part of the province of Ulster. Under pretence that the laws of hospitality had been violated by the grandfather of Fergus the king of Eamania towards his own great-grandfather, Cormac, he furnished

the two brothers with an army to invade the northern province which they entered; slew Fergus the king of that dynasty, the remains of the knights of the Red Branch, and most of the great men of that ancient kingdom; burned the famous palace of Eamania, so celebrated for its heroic princes during the lapse of ages; and took possession of that tract of land, which from this period was called Orgial, and subsequently Uriel, comprehending the present counties of Louth, Monaghan, and Armagh.

After this act of violence and injustice we find Colbach, a prince of the injured house of Eamania, taking ample vengeance upon the real author of this catastrophe. He not only defeated the monarch's army in the field, but killed Muredach himself in single combat; and having usurped the sovereign authority, he was himself slain in an engagement, before the close of the same year by the son of his predecessor.

On the death of this Ultonian prince, Eochy, the son of Muredach, who succeeded him, soon found himself engaged with Eana, the king of Leinster, aided by Luagh of the Bloody Hand, the king of southern Ireland, in a war which was by no means successful on his part. And as each of the posterity of Tuathal was regularly interrupted in his accession to the throne by a rival claimant, this prince was succeeded A. D. 360, by Criomthan, a most successful plunderer of the Roman settlements in Britain. It is also said that he carried his successes as far as Gaul; but on his return home, he was poisoned by his own sister, at Sliabh Vidhe, near Limerick, and was succeeded, A. D. 375, by Niall the Great, the youngest son of Eochy, the ate monarch.

So early as the reign of the monarch Art, the first regular Irish settlement had been made in North Britain by Carbry Riada. Before this period, in the frequent visits of the Irish to that country, many of them had, at various times, remained behind, from the close affinity between them and the Picts; but they had not been formed into any regular or independent community. They had taken up their residence there rather as individuals than as colonists, until Carbry led a number of his followers thither, and established a settlement in Argyleshire,* which is supposed to have derived its name of Dalriada from him.

From the first establishment of this colony, it had gradually increased, and, at the accession of Niall, had become so powerful that the Picts themselves began to regard the settlers with a jealous eye. Considering themselves the original proprietors of the country, they resolved either to expel the Irish from their possessions, or to reduce their power, so as to oblige them to acknowledge themselves tributaries to their more ancient neighbours. The Irish colonists, however, had become too strong to submit to this state of subordination; and they applied to their own monarch for assistance which he readily afforded them. The Picts were therefore compelled to acknowledge the Irish settlers as independent of them, and were obliged to make a peaceable partition of the country, by which Argyle, Cantire, and several other districts became the portion of the colonists.† This colony, which was at first

* Bed. Hist. Eccles. Brit. Lib. 1. Cap. 1.

† For an account of the origin and progress of this colony, the reader may consult *Cambrensis*, *Cambden*, and other *British writers*.

confined to t' : north of Scotland, became at length so powerful that eventually, under Kenneth Mac Alpine, in the ninth century, it swallowed up the Pictish power and extended its dominion over the whole of North Britain.

Niall's reign was one of enterprise and heroic action. Besides the aid he gave to the Irish colonists when menaced by their Pictish neighbours, he subsequently evinced that his ambition was not to be confined, like that of his predecessors, within the circumscribed limits of provincial enterprise: for in the twelfth year of his reign he led his troops into Gaul, and after distressing and plundering the inhabitants of that country, he carried away captive a numerous band of Celtic youth, amongst whom was Succathus, so well known in Irish history afterwards by the name of St. Patrick. His object in returning at this time to his own country was to chastise some supposed insolence of Eochy, the provincial dynast of Leinster, whose province he overran, levied the usual tribute upon his people, and declared he would reduce the whole country to ashes, should they refuse to deliver up their king into his hands. Eochy, however, contrived to make his escape in Scotland, and obtained an asylum with his kinsman Gabhra, the chief of the Dalriada.

Having been thus driven from his native country, the king of Leinster immediately began to form schemes of revenge upon the Irish monarch. Nor was it long before he had an opportunity of reducing to practice his contemplated project. Having been admitted as a volunteer to follow his friend, who accompanied the monarch of Ireland on another expedition into Gaul, he found the latter sitting one day unattended on the banks of the river Loire,

and stimulated by revenge, he discharged an arrow at him from a thicket on the other side, which pierced him through the heart, and he instantly expired.

Satisfied with the vengeance he had thus treacherously taken, Eochy immediately returned to Ireland, took possession again of the throne of Leinster, and reigned in that province for many years afterwards.

Niall, the late monarch, was also surnamed of the Nine Hostages, because he is said to have detained so many at Tara, from different parts of Ireland and North Britain at the same time. His descendants were very numerous. He had eight sons, from whom are descended many ancient families of distinction in Ireland; and as their possessions lay partly in Ulster, and partly in Meath, they were subsequently distinguished into the Northern and Southern Hy-Nialls.

A. D. 406. The same unceasing hostilities towards the inhabitants of South Britain, that had occupied so large a portion of the late monarch's time and attention, continued to be practically pursued by Dathy, his nephew and successor, during the whole of that period in which he sat upon the sovereign throne. This prince, who was distinguished for the sprightliness and vivacity of his temper, as well as for his strength and agility, not only made several inroads upon the Romish settlements in Britain, but pursued the object of his resentment into Gaul, where he was killed by a flash of lightning at the foot of the Alps. His body was brought home by his followers, and buried in the ancient cemetery of the Irish kings, called Roilig-na-Riogh, near Cruachain in the province of Connaught: and with him ended the heathen monarchs of Ireland.

In reviewing this part of the history of that ancient and in many respects, peculiar people, the evils attendant upon an elective form of government must be forcibly impressed upon our minds. The permanent maintenance, however, of the Irish monarchy, through so many ages of insubordination and blood, proves that it was not an institution originating in the mere transient impulse of a fickle populace, but in a national conviction that it was the best means of insuring a just equipoise amongst the subordinate powers that formed so many distinct members of the Irish commonwealth. During the reign of the last two heathen monarchs we can perceive also that the line of isolation by which the country was in a great measure shut out from the rest of Europe, was broken through, and a communication opened between it and the continent; which, how inauspicious soever it may appear in the commencement, became afterwards so beneficial to the interests of religion, and produced those effects which may be perceived in the subsequent part of Irish history.

CHAPTER IV.

Conversion of the Irish to Christianity.

By whom the gospel was first introduced into Ireland cannot be determined with any degree of certainty; but it was most probably by missionaries sent from the east.* In the second and third centuries, Christianity had made a considerable progress in the southern province of the island. Numerous churches had been founded and schools established in which not only the natives, but many foreigners were instructed in sacred and polite letters.†

Amongst the numerous conjectures about the particular places which respectively gave birth to some of those eminent men that have distinguished themselves, either for good or evil, in the church, it has been supposed by some that Pelagius, the heresiarch, though generally reputed a British monk, was a native of Ireland;‡ but, whatever truth there

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* See Led. Ant., p. 359.—"The constant enmity," says O'Halloran, "between this country and ancient Rome, prevented any kind of friendly intercourse. This doctrine came not immediately from thence here, but from the churches of Asia; and this explains what Tertullian notes.—*Britannarum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo vero subdita—O'Hal., Book V'I., Chap. I.*

† Usser. Primord., p. 801.

‡ "Pelagius professione monachus, natione non Gallus Brito, ut Danæus putavit; nec Ango-Britannus, ut scripsit Balæus, sed Scotus."—*Voss. Hist. Pelag., Lib*

may be in this conjecture, there is no doubt that his disciple Celestius, who is denominated by St. Jerome, "the leader of the whole Pelagian army,"* was an Irishman by birth, and scarcely less celebrated than his preceptor for his great abilities in theological disputation. Some of his letters to his parents in Ireland are still extant, and one written at a later period "on the knowledge of Divine Law," which is said to be manifestly imbued with the heresy of his master.†

But notwithstanding Christianity had made some progress in Munster, and the Irish Church had produced Cathaldus, Kiaran, Ibar, Declan, and other divines of considerable note, there had been no general ingathering of the people to the Christian fold: and as the mission of Palladius, who was sent by Celestine, the Bishop of Rome,‡ in the year 431, and whose labours seem to have been confined principally to that tract which now comprehends the counties of Wexford and Wicklow, was a complete failure, the honour of the general conversion of the people to the Christian faith was reserved for St. Patrick, who has been justly denominated "the Apostle of Ireland."

Different attempts have been made to account for the failure of Palladius. Nennius observes, that no man can receive anything upon earth, unless it be given him from heaven. Probus remarks, the Irish were wild and barbarous, and would not receive the doctrine of Palladius. Joceline says, because they would not believe his preaching

* Jerome is sometimes coarse in his abuse of Celestius, and with bitterness remarks that "he was made fat with *Scotch* flummery."—*Scotorum pultibus prægravatus. Hier. Præf. t., Lib. I.*

† Gennad. Cap. 44. Cited by Dr. Ledwich, Ant. p. 358.

‡ Bed. Hist. Eccles., Lib. 1. Cap. 13.

but most obstinately opposed him, he departed from their country. But these are all mere evasions of the truth. The reason of his failure assigned by O'Halloran is probably the true one, when he says, "Palladius presumed too much on his mission from Rome, and wanted to extort a greater reverence and obedience from the Irish clergy than they thought him entitled to."* He was, in fact, an intruder into a church which was complete and independent: the people therefore would neither respect his foreign commission, nor obey an extra-national jurisdiction; and this is the tenor of the ecclesiastical history of the country till the twelfth century.†

While St. Patrick was still alive, one of his intimate friends, Fiech, Bishop of Sletty in the county of Carlow, comprehended the most material events of his Life in an Irish poem of thirty-four stanzas,‡ which was translated into Latin, and subsequently published with the Irish by John Colgan. But as Fiech died before his patron himself, this poem is incomplete when viewed as a biography. There are, however, three productions of St. Patrick's own pen still extant; and in one of these, which is called his *Confession*, he gives some account of his travels, adventures, and feelings under different circumstances. And from the poem which we have already mentioned, as well as from this document, together with the testimony of some early writers, it is not difficult to collect a well-authenticated statement respecting his missionary labours and subsequent success.

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* O'Hal. Hist., Book VII. Chap. II.

† Ledwich's Antiquities.

‡ Ware. Archbishops of Armagh. St. Patrick

The place of the nativity, as well as the year of the birth of this eminent missionary is uncertain: but it is most probable, from his own account,* that he was born in Armoric Brittany, in the north-west of France, about the year of our Lord 387, and was therefore of Celtic origin. He was the son of Calphornius a deacon, and the grandson of Potitus a priest; and, we may add, that his original name was Succathus, which, according to an ancient custom that was sometimes followed, was changed to that of Magonius when he first received holy orders, and to that of Patricius when he was consecrated a Bishop.† The sanctity of his aspect and the patrician dignity of his manners and appearance having suggested the name of Patricius to Germanus, the Bishop by whom he was consecrated.

In the sixteenth year of his age Succathus, as he was then called, having been taken captive in one of the predatory excursions of the Irish monarch upon the maritime coasts of Gaul, was sold to a person named Milcho, an inhabitant of that district now forming the county of Antrim, in the province of Ulster. During the period of his servitude, he was employed by his master in the care of his sheep; and in his solitary rambles over the mountain of Sliebh Mis he cultivated daily that spirit of devotion for which he was so distinguished at a more mature age.

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* His own words are,—"Patrem habui Calpharnium diaconum, filium quondam Potiti presbyteri, qui fuit in vico Bonavem Taberniæ: villulam Enon prope habuit, ubi capturam dedi." *Confessio.*—It may be observed that *Bonavem Taberniæ* was the same town that has since been called *Boulogne-sur-Mer*, in Picardy. See *Lan. Eccles. Hist.* C. III.

† Lives of Illus. and Distin. Irishmen, p. 28.

His clear and scriptural account of his own feelings at this time, and of his fervency and perseverance in prayer; together with the strain of pure evangelical piety which runs through the whole of his Narrative, affords incontestible evidence, that it must have been written at a period of very superior light and knowledge, and must have come from the pen of a man who was habitually conversant with the oracles of God.

In the seventh year after his capture, in consequence of an old law of Ireland which limited a state of servitude to that period,* he obtained his freedom; and immediately made his way to the sea-side that he might return to his own country. But when he had arrived there, a serious difficulty presented itself, as the master of the vessel in which he intended to sail refused to take him on board, because he was without money, and therefore unable to pay for his passage.† Disappointed thus in his fondest hopes and wishes, he went in search of a cottage where he might remain till some other opportunity should present itself of returning to his friends, and in the meantime he betook himself to prayer, the usual means of his comfort and consolation: but while he was thus engaged, it is said, that the sailors sent after him to effect his return, took him on board, and immediately set sail for their destination.‡

After much difficulty and some additional misfortunes, he at length joined the circle of those friends with whom

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* "There seems to have been a law in Ireland, agreeable to the institution of Moses, that a servant should be released the seventh year." *Ware.*

† Prob. Vit. S. Patrick, Lib. 1. Cap. 4.

‡ Ware. Archbishops of Armagh. ST. PATRICK.

he had passed the morning of life: but his devotional habits soon induced him to relinquish their society, and associate himself with the inmates of a monastery founded at Tours, by St. Martin, his maternal uncle. During his state of religious seclusion in this place, he was surprised, he says, one night in a dream, by the appearance of a messenger,* who brought him a great number of letters, in one of which he saw the words, "The Voice of the Irish," and at the same moment he thought he heard the inhabitants near the Western ocean crying out to him with one voice, "to come and walk among them."

Impressed with a vivid recollection of this singular dream, his resolution was soon formed, and it became the fixed purpose of his mind to embrace the first opportunity of going to assist in the conversion of the Irish. By his piety and zeal, as well as by his knowledge of the country and language, he was eminently qualified for such an undertaking: but for several years we can learn so little of his history that we are unable to say what prevented him from carrying into immediate effect the project which he had in contemplation. The first matter of importance in which we find him engaged, was when he accompanied Germanus and Lupus, two of the Bishops of Gaul, who were sent by their brethren in that country into Britain for the purpose of checking the growth of Pelagianism in the British church.

In the course, however, of about three years afterwards

* Vidi in visu, nocte, virum venientem quasi de Hiberione cui nomen Victoricius cum epistulis innumerabilibus, et dedit mihi unam ex illis, et legi principium epistulæ continentem, Vox Hiberionacum.—*Confess.*

he was consecrated to the episcopal office, at Ebaria,* by Germanus, and proceeded on the mission that had occupied his thoughts for so many years. He first landed at a port in the territory of the Evoleni,† called Jubher-Dea, now the port of Wicklow; and notwithstanding the opposition of a chieftain in that place, named Nathi, one of the persecutors of Palladius in the preceding year, he was the honored instrument of the conversion of Sinell,‡ a descendant of Cormac, king of Leinster.

Having next visited Rath-Jubher, near the mouth of the river Bray, he sailed along the coast till he reached an island contiguous to the county of Dublin, since called Inis-Phadruig; but having been repelled by some of the natives, he proceeded northward, and, with his associates, again disembarked at a landing place near Strangford in the county of Down. The appearance of so large a company, and all apparently foreigners, as they proceeded from the vessel, naturally alarmed the inhabitants for their own safety; and they instantly concluded that they were a gang of pirates who had entered the country for the purpose of plundering the neighbourhood and carrying off their booty to the ship. Intelligence, therefore, having been speedily con-

* It has been asserted, without any sufficient authority, that St. Patrick was consecrated by the Bishop of Rome who had sent Palladius into Ireland: but as the latter died on the 15th of December, 431, and Celestine on the 6th of April following, it is not probable that this should have occurred in the short space of time which elapsed between these two periods. See Lives, &c., p. 89.

† Prob. Lib. 1. Cap. 27.

‡ Usser. Primord. p. 846.

veyed to Dicho, the chieftain of that district, he hastened to the spot with a number of armed followers, in order to oppose the aggression of the foreigners. But finding them unarmed, and being struck with the venerable appearance of the Bishop, his indignation was turned into curiosity, and he enquired for what purpose they had entered the country. As soon as St. Patrick had informed him of his great design, and had obtained permission to explain the nature and principles of Christianity, he preached the gospel to the people in their own language, in such a forcible and zealous manner, that not only numbers of the inhabitants of the district, but the chieftain himself and all his family were converted to the Christian faith, and received baptism at the hands of the missionaries. It is also said, that in gratitude for the mercy he had received, Dicho dedicated to God the ground upon which this first sermon was preached; and that the house in which divine service was celebrated on this occasion was afterwards called *Sabhul Fhadruig* or Patrick's Barn.*

The scenes of former years were no doubt revivified in the mind of the Bishop by his visit to the northern province; and it was quite natural for him, while he was in the vicinity, to feel considerable anxiety about his former master, and to make some attempt to rescue him from the idolatry and superstition in which he knew he had been educated: but his pious intention was most painfully disappointed. His former owner having heard of his arrival and of his design respecting himself, refused to see him or to listen to his instructions, and he was therefore obliged to relinquish his benevolent purpose.

* Ware. Archbishops of Armagh. St. Patrick.

Some time after the arrival of the missionaries, a great national convention was about to be held at Tara, and St. Patrick was resolved to attend that meeting that he might have an opportunity of preaching to the monarch and assembled chieftains the unsearchable riches of Christ. Having therefore set out for this purpose, he arrived at the mouth of the Boyne, where he left his boat, and proceeded with his associates to the plain of Breg, contiguous to the site of the ancient city of Tara. Here they lighted a very large fire at the place where they had taken up their temporary residence, either forgetting that it was the eve of one of the great Druidical festivals, and therefore unlawful to kindle a fire except from that which was lighted by the priests; or else being resolved to break through that superstitious custom, and to show their abhorrence of the system of idolatry with which it was connected.

No sooner was this fire kindled than it was seen from the heights of Tara, notwithstanding the intervening distance was about eight miles* and the Druids enraged at the contempt thus poured upon their authority, preferred their complaint to the monarch, before whom St. Patrick was summoned to appear the next day. To this summons he gladly responded—appeared before the convention—and when questioned by Laogary, the king, he replied, "that he had entered the island under the banner of love and universal benevolence, to raise him up a new people, through a warfare which was purely spiritual; and that he had no other object in view, but to render his people better men and better subjects."†

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* Ware *ut supra.*

† M.S.—Life of St. Patrick, quoted by Mr. O'Connor. *Dissert.*, p. 196.

Laogary, who knew that he had numerous enemies among his nominal subjects, was probably pleased to hear this, and therefore the more readily gave permission to the missionaries to explain and defend their doctrines. It is not certain, however, that he was himself among the converts made on this occasion, but it is said, that his two daughters and a vast number of other persons enrolled themselves at that time among the disciples of Christ.

Encouraged by their success and stimulated by the ardour of their zeal, like rivers that wind and wander in their course in order to diffuse their beneficial influence the more extensively, the missionaries continued their progress to other parts of the island; and having left Meath, they proceeded westward, St. Patrick being desirous of visiting the wood of Fochlut in the county of Mayo,* bordering on the western ocean from which he had heard, several years before, so many voices in his dream. In his journey thither, however, he deviated from his direct route, that he might visit that place of horror in the county of Leitrim, where, for many centuries, the great idol, called Crom-cruach, stood. On his theatre of a sanguinary superstition the missionaries instantly unfurled the banner of the Prince of Peace: and such was their success that they had the satisfaction of witnessing not only the subversion of the idolatrous system of worship practised at that place, but the total destruction of the idol itself, and the erection of a Christian church in its stead.

It would be impossible to describe the success which at-

* "The wood of Fochlut stood in the territory of Tir-Amalgaid, now the barony of Tirawley, west of the river May, which empties itself into the sea at Killala." *Ware.*

tended the efforts of these eminent men as they proceeded in their work and labour of love. There were also many singular coincidences which marked their progress that cannot fail to be recognized as so many signal proofs of the special interference of Providence in their behalf.

Having arrived contiguous to the wood of Fochlut, at a time when a vast number of people were assembled to salute a new chieftain of that territory, St. Patrick preached to the assembled multitude; and it is said that in a short time he baptized "many thousands,"* including the new toparch and his brothers, who all became decided and zealous advocates of the holy cause in which he was engaged.

For the space of sixteen years, this indefatigable man, with his companions, was employed in the northern and western parts of the island, before he made any attempt to visit the southern province. The bishops of Munster, when they had been previously visited by Palladius, who, in addition to his ignorance of their language, very possibly claimed some kind of jurisdiction over them, declared most unequivocally to that missionary, that their church had never been subject to any foreign or extra-national authority, and that therefore they could not suffer any foreigner to deprive them of their rights.† But notwithstanding the existence of this church, which had produced many holy and eminent men, there had been no general conversion of the people to the Christian faith, even in that province; and St. Patrick having at length arrived in Munster, the same success attended his ministry as had been witnessed in the north. Numbers were convinced of the

* S. Patric. Confess. p. 19.

† Usser. Primord, p. 801.

truth under his preaching, including amongst them all the chief men of the province. Besides, what was of essential moment to the welfare of the rising church, a perfect understanding was brought about between the immigrant missionaries and the bishops who had already jurisdiction in that part of the island.*

Having spent seven years in the south of Ireland, he proceeded, about the year 455, to the province of Leinster, and in this tour visited the city of Dublin, then commonly called Bealiacliath, where by his preaching, Alphin, the king of that territory, was converted to the Christian faith, and was baptized with all his people, in a fountain near the present site of St. Patrick's cathedral.

It was probably after his southern tour that he formed the design of establishing an episcopal see at Armagh, the land of that territory having been granted him by the proprietor. Here, it is said, he laid out the site of a city†—built a cathedral—established a school—and founded that Diocese which, in process of time, became the Metropolitan see of the whole island.

From this period he spent the greater part of his time between Armagh and Sabhul in the county of Antrim, where he had preached his first sermon in Ulster; and which appears to have been ever after his favourite retreat. At Armagh he held several synods of the clergy in which canons and constitutions were passed for the government of the Church. To these were added afterwards several others that were decreed at a later date, but there

* Han. Chron. p. 35. O'Hal. Hist., Book VII., C. 2.

† Prob. Vit. S. Patric., Lib. II, Cap. 7.

can be no reasonable doubt of the authenticity of those that are ascribed to St. Patrick himself.

It was during this state of comparative retirement, that he is supposed to have written his Confession or Narrative, as a memorial of the singular success with which God had blessed him. It is written in a homely and characteristic style in the Latin tongue, for which he apologizes, as he had been in the habit of speaking only in Irish for so many years. He seems to have had some presentiment of his death while engaged in this work: and he accordingly closed his apostolical labours at Sabhul, as he died on the 17th of March A.D. 465, in the seventy-eighth year of his age and thirty-third of his ministry in Ireland.

As soon as it was known that the great apostle of Ireland was dead there was a general concourse of the Bishops and clergy at Sabhul to assist at his funeral, and to evince their affectionate respect for their venerable father in Christ. His mortal remains were interred at Downpatrick,* with all due solemnity, where he rests from his labours while his works follow him.

His character is best exhibited by the salutary revolution which he was enabled to accomplish in the religion of the nation. To have been the instrument employed by the great Head of the Church for the conversion of almost a nation of pagans to the faith of the Redeemer, and to have established a Church amongst his converts upon so firm a basis, were achievements incomparably more honorable than to have conquered mighty nations, and to have established

* "All the early Irish writers affirm that St. Patrick was buried at Down, in Ireland; and it is from such authorities that the truth must be drawn."—*Ware*.

the most powerful dynasty that ever existed in the present world. There can be no doubt that ministry of men whose natural talents could not be said to rise above mediocrity, has been frequently blessed and made the instrument of extensive good. But still their success has not been of that particular kind which attended the preaching of St. Patrick. Whenever he obtained a hearing, whether before rulers or their subjects, he seldom failed to convince his auditors of the truth and importance of his doctrine, and the natural inference is that he was a powerful and persuasive preacher.* It is also probable that he possessed a happy talent of illustrating his subjects by selections from the kingdom of nature. It is said, that in attempting to simplify the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity to his untaught auditors, he plucked up a sprig of the *trefoil*, or shamrock, and showed them from its three expanded leaves growing out of one stem, and partaking of the same nature, how three subsistences in one essence exist in the Godhead; and hence his followers very naturally adopted the shamrock as their national emblem, in commemoration of the prime article of the faith in which he had instructed them.

No individual has suffered more in his posthumous reputation than St Patrick has done, or has been more nearly reduced to a mere fictitious personage by the puerile

* "If we would judge by the writings ascribed to this missionary, he was vastly inferior to his cotemporaries, Hierome the monk, Ambrose of Milan, and Augustine of Hippo; but to judge of him by his success in preaching, he excelled the three, and appears to be as successful a missionary as lived since the apostolic age.'—*O'Con. Dis., p.* 195.

inventions of his mediæval biographers. The writers of his life were so numerous in the middle ages, that when Joceline, the monk, in the twelfth century, set about the task of giving to the world an additional biography of this distinguished missionary, he found that no less than sixty-six writers had preceded him in a similar undertaking* Had all their productions survived the wreck of the northern invasion, it would probably be found, that imagination had employed her creative powers in every successive biography, and that fresh miracles were to be found recorded in each of them as having been wrought by the supernatural powers with which he was supposed to have been invested.

Joceline informs us, that from four of the Lives of St. Patrick which had not been destroyed by the Dares, he selected such facts as he could find deserving of credit;† and hence we may fairly conclude, he rejected such statements as he deemed to be unworthy of belief. But even after such an expurgatorial process, we are gravely informed by this monk, that St. Patrick, while an infant, brought a new river from the earth, which gave sight to the blind—that he produced fire from ice—that he raised his nurse from the dead—that he cast a devil out of a heifer—and performed a variety of other miracles, equally surprising, and some of them as useless as they were extravagant.

But in adverting to the miracles which this writer has professed to consider credible, we ought not to omit one of

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* Vit. S. Patric. p. 81.

† Quæcumque fide digna reperire potui. *Vit. S. Pat.*

the most popular of the wonders which he has recorded, and to which the physical properties of the soil and climate of Ireland have contributed to give a degree of credit which the other miracles, ascribed to St. Patrick cannot claim.

It is stated, that in the season of Lent, he was accustomed to spend much of his time, upon the solitary summit of a mountain in the county of Mayo, which is still known by the name of Croagh Patrick: and that on one occasion, as a boon to his converts, he collected all the vipers, serpents, snakes, and venomous reptiles in the Island, and by an authoritative mandate drove them all headlong into the Atlantic Ocean.* But unfortunately for the credit of this popular tradition, the ancient geographers, who wrote about two hundred years before the birth of St. Patrick, mention as a natural curiosity, that no snake or reptile of the serpent kind had any existence at that time in Ireland. So that to what cause soever this exemption may be attributed, there is no ground for ascribing it to the supernatural powers supposed to have been possessed by the Irish Apostle.

Such are a few specimens of the monstrous fictions with which the writers of the dark ages have interlarded the biography of this excellent missionary: but to the Christian who peruses his history impartially, it must be evident that the work which he accomplished afforded a more signal proof that the hand of God was with him, than all the miraculous powers ascribed to him would have done, had he really exercised them in the way that some of his biographers have stated.

* Joceline Vit. S. Patric. Cap. 170.

The anile credulity of the mediæval writers, in giving currency to the legends recorded of St. Patrick, induced Dr. Ledwich and some others of very inferior note, to contend for the non-existence of St. Patrick, and to ascribe the whole of his history to the imaginative qualities of the monks of the middle ages. But a little consideration, if accompanied with the slightest degree of candour, will soon dissipate the mists of this historical scepticism, and place the reality of his history in its proper light.

Early in the seventeenth century, Dr. Ryves, one of the Masters in Chancery, having had occasion to consider minutely the ancient history of the Irish Church, first suggested the idea of the non-existence of St. Patrick, and questioned the account of the conversion of the Irish people to the Christian faith by means of his ministry. Probably the doctor was an interested party in this view of the question, as the cause which he had then in hands might have been more easily decided could his suggestions have been fully established. Being contemporary with Usher and Cambden, the two great luminaries of Irish and British antiquities, he communicated his objections in a letter to the former, and requested he would lay them before Mr. Cambden, and obtain his opinions upon their force and validity. Usher accordingly enclosed the letter to his friend, and the result was, after mature deliberation, that these two great antiquarians came to the same conclusion, that the objections were groundless, and that the existence of St. Patrick was as well established as that of any other personage recorded in the history of the time in which he lived.*

* Dr. Ledwich, in his usual strain of insolence, impeaches the moral honesty of these two eminent men for their decision on

Had the biography indeed of this eminent missionary been altogether a literary fabrication of the middle ages, it is obvious that it must have been forged to answer some particular purpose; but what this purpose was has never yet been discovered. It does not appear *prima facie* to have been the mere figment of a sportive imagination which was never intended to be received as a grave portion of the ecclesiastical history of Ireland; and all the circumstances in it (the miraculous agency ascribed to the missionary excepted) exhibit the strongest evidence, that from what source soever it may have had its origin, it could not have been fabricated by any writer of the middle ages.

The first work which narrates the principal events of St Patrick's Life is that poem to which we have already alluded written by St. Fiech, one of his own disciples* and advanced by him to the episcopal dignity. These incidents, it is true, have been overlaid, by subsequent biographers, with the most extravagant fictions; but, even arrayed with these contemptible embellishments, they give evident proofs that, if ever they were forged, it must have been at a period anterior to the erection in Ireland of the papal system with its incidental appendages.

We are told in his Confession that he was the son of a deacon and the grandson of a priest; and it is not likely that such a statement as this should have been invented in the

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this subject. "On the present occasion," says he, "our learned primate and his excellent friend deviate strangely from strict veracity." *Ant.*, p. 363. But the judicious reader will know how to estimate the respective merits of these two great antiquarians and of their dogmatical opponent.

* Vide S. Patrick Opusc.

middle ages, or made at all, had not the writers been confined to facts that could not be suppressed. To reconcile therefore the account of his parentage with the celibacy of the clergy enjoined in after ages, Joceline was obliged to assume that they had taken orders after the birth of their children. But this is a gratuitous asumption and based upon a false supposition that the celibacy of the clergy was an original institution of the Church.

The writings of St. Patrick, as collected by Sir James Ware,* consist of three parts. The first, which is called his Confession, contains in itself such internal evidence of its authenticity as to set the captious objections that have been raised against it at defiance. The general agreement of its contents with those of the history of the time in which he is averred to have lived, affords a strong presumptive evidence in its favour; an agreement which could not have been the result of literary imposture. Besides there is such a consistency in its several statements as could hardly be found in a mere historical forgery. At the time of his consecration, in the year 432, he says that a friend of his reproached him with a sin of which he had been guilty thirty years before, when he had scarcely attained to the fifteenth year of his age. This would make him therefore about forty-five at the time of his consecration. Now as the expedition of Niall the great into Gaul, in which St Patrick was taken captive, occurred about the year 403, it must have happened just twenty-nine years before his elevation to the episcopal office: and when we deduct twenty-nine from forty-five we have a remainder of sixteen, which is the

* St. Patrick's Works were collected and published in London by Sir James Ware, in 1656

precise age he is stated to have been at the time of his captivity. It is highly improbable therefore, that his biographers should have succeeded so well in making all their dates, taken in what order soever they might be, harmonize in this manner, and that too, without appearing to have any such object in view, had his Confession been, as asserted by Dr. Ledwich, "the juvenile exercise of some monk of the eleventh or twelfth century."*

The strain of pure evangelical piety also which runs through the Confession, so inconsistent with the theology of the cloistered ecclesiastics of the middle ages, presents no slight indication of the age in which it was written. The simple facts too recorded in this production, when compared with the miracles ascribed to him by the writers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, will be found to strengthen the cogency of the foregoing observations; and are sufficient to satisfy the candid and ingenuous that both could not have originated from the same source.

The second part of his works is a tract entitled *De Tribus Habitaculis*, which deserves to be specially noticed, as containing internal evidence of the impossibility of its having been produced by any of the mediæval writers. In this he treats of the joys of heaven and the torments of hell, but there is not the slightest allusion in it to any other receptacle for the souls of the departed. Hence it may be inferred that this tract was written in an age before the doctrine of purgatory became prevalent in the Western church, and consequently that it could not have been forged in the middle ages by any of the monks of the church of Rome.

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* Led. Ant. Ire. P. 161.

Besides, one circumstance mentioned by Ware should not be overlooked in judging of the authenticity of those works ascribed to St. Patrick. The texts of Scripture cited in them are all translations from the Septuagint, and not quotations directly from the Vulgate; and this circumstance would of itself, in the mind of every scholar, determine the time in which they were written to the age in which St. Patrick lived.

The third part of these works contains several constitutions and canons ascribed to St. Patrick, together with others that were subsequently added. The number of ecclesiastical enactments collected by Ware, Dachery and others, would form a very large and curious volume, and throw much light upon the civil and ecclesiastical history of Ireland. Several of the canons of the Irish church enacted in the eigth, ninth, and tenth centuries, were adopted not only in England where the Irish ecclesiastics had such extensive influence,* but even by several of the prelates on the continent. Some of those canons are peculiarly remarkable and interesting. One of them commands that no curse or malediction† should be pronounced against the excommunicated, though they were ordered to be repelled from the society of the faithful. Another, that in taking an oath, God the Creator is alone to be adjured; and quotes the authority of St. Paul, that an oath being the end of all strife, should be made only to the Almighty. In the next, swearing on the gospels is mentioned: a mode of

* In 750, Ecgbriht, Archbishop of York, inserted five of the Irish Canons among his *Excerptions* which were compiled for the use of his diocese.

† *Non maledices.*—S. Patric. Opusc p. 32.

appealing to the Searcher of Hearts indicative of the purity of the ancient religion of the Irish, but inconsistent with the custom subsequently introduced of swearing on bells, crosiers, and the relics of saints. One of the Canons in Dachery enacts, that he who has lived irreproachably from his youth to his thirtieth year, contented with one wife that had been a virgin,—who had been a sub-deacon five years, and as many a deacon,—may in his fortieth year be a priest, and at fifty a bishop. Another anathematizes those who exalt celibacy above the married state; and agrees in this with the sentiments and practice of the clergy in the first and purest ages of the church.

CHAPTER V.

Christianity in Ireland till the Death of St. Columba.

The conversion of the Irish nation to the religion of Christ was a signal triumph over the sanguinary system of superstition which had prevailed for so many ages amongst the people: but it had little effect upon the constitution and laws by which all their civil affairs were regulated.

Absorbed as the Irish writers of a subsequent period were in ecclesiastical matters, they seem to have overlooked for a time the civil history of their country; and from this cause their account of the latter is very meagre and imperfect. Besides as it was some centuries after their conversion, before the Irish adopted the computation of time by the Christian era, their chronology in the interim is very uncertain and inaccurate.

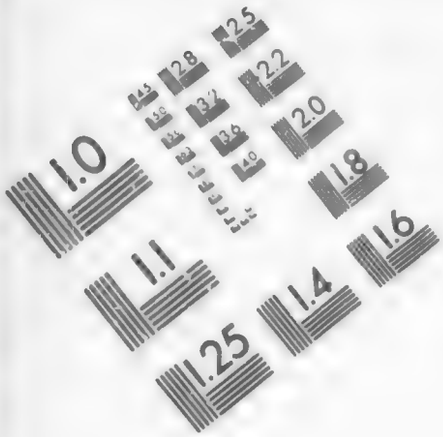
The change in the habits and moral conduct of the people, which the Christian religion is always known to effect, appears to have had but little influence in checking the effusion of human blood; and in the back ground of the picture drawn of the piety and virtue which adorned the character of so many of the professors of the new faith, we can perceive the same lust of power, as well as the same treachery and ferocity, though probably not to the same extent, as that which disgraced some of the Irish princes under the gloomy superstition to which they were formerly subject.

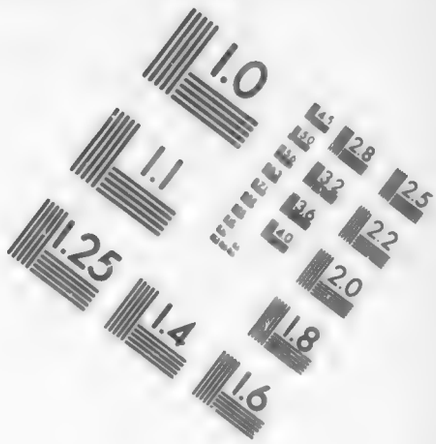
The successful exertions of St. Patrick and his associates give a brilliant lustre to the reign of that monarch during whose administration the Irish Church was planted and consolidated. Laogary, however, was not so fortunate in his civil transactions as to transmit his name to posterity with respect and celebrity; for having entered Leinster in a hostile manner, in order to enforce the payment of the Boromean tribute, he was met by Criointhan, the king of that province, at Atha-Dara in the county of Kildare; and in the battle which ensued, the monarch's forces were defeated with considerable slaughter. He was also taken prisoner himself, and in order to regain his liberty, was obliged to swear by the sun, the wind, and the elements, that he would exonerate the Lagenians from all future demands of this nature.

Compelled to submit to this humiliating condition, no sooner had the monarch regained his freedom than he protested against all proceedings and promises into which he had been forced during his captivity: but as he ended his career in a short time afterwards, he was unable to take any decisive action on the resolution which he then had formed. He is said to have reigned thirty years as monarch of Ireland; and to have died by an immediate visitation of God, as a punishment for the breach of his oath to the Lagenians.*

* In the annals of the Four Masters we have the following entry on this subject:

A. D. 458. Postquam fuisset XXX annis in regimine Hiberniæ, Laogarius filius Nialli Novi-obsidum, occisus est prope cassiam inter Erin et Albaniam (i. e.) duos colles qui sunt in regione Faolan, et sol et venti occiderunt eum quia temeravit eos.





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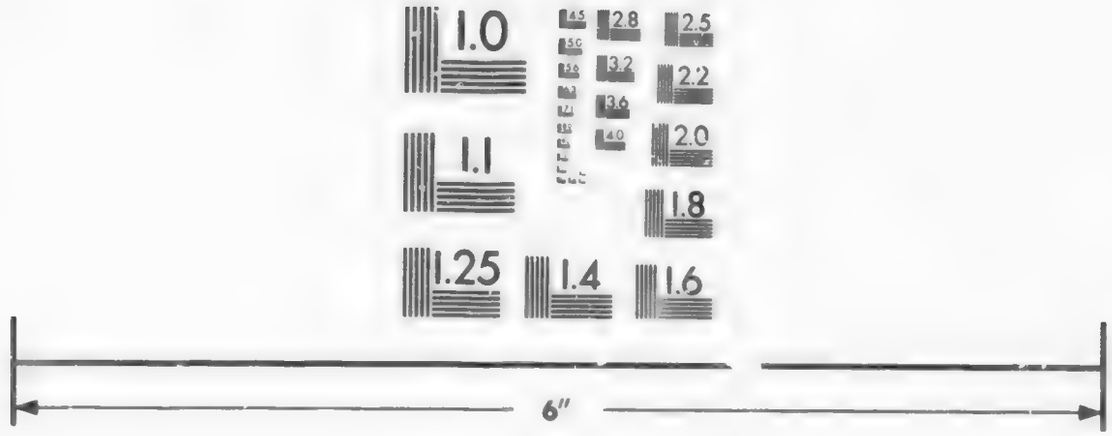

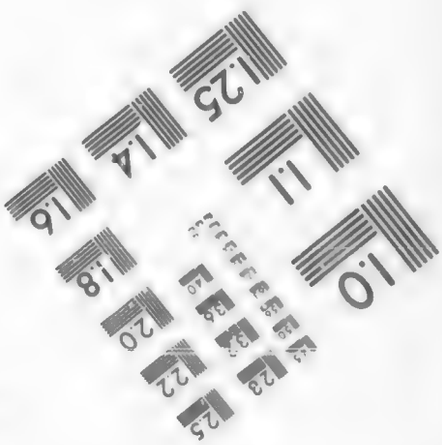

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Whether Laogary embraced the Christian faith or not before his death is uncertain; but it is a matter which admits of no doubt that some of the provincial princes during his reign received the Sacrament of Baptism at the hands of St. Patrick and his associates.

A. D. 463. No prince ever ascended a throne under more favourable circumstances than Ollial Molt, the son of Dathy, who now succeeded to the monarchy. His kindred, the sons and grandsons of Niall the Great, being not yet sufficiently established in their respective principalities, consented to his election;* and he was accordingly chosen to succeed the late monarch on the sovereign throne. Several conventions of the states were assembled, during his reign, at Tara; and almost all the princes and nobility of the kingdom had received baptism at the hands of the missionaries. But Lugad, the son of Laogary, who had been in his minority at the time of his father's death, and therefore incapable of succeeding him, having now arrived at the age required by the law, resolved to seize on the monarchy or die in the attempt. Having therefore leagued with some other princes, he soon appeared at the head of an army sufficiently powerful to support his pretensions to the throne.

A. D. 483. The monarch, being aware of his proceedings, and of the formidable force he had been enabled to procure, made every preparation to resist his claims, and having collected all his friends and dependants to his standard, he met the army of his rival upon the plains of Ocha, in the county of Meath. The battle was so well sustained on both sides, and the carnage was so extensive

* See O'Connor's Dissert. p. 205.

in which many of the prime nobility, as well as the monarch himself, were slain, that the senachies began to reckon a new era from it, as they generally did from any event that was peculiarly remarkable or interesting.

By the issue of the battle of Ocha, the elder branch of the Tuathalian line was set aside and confined to the provincial government of Connaught: whilst the Hy-Nialls got possession of the supreme government, which they held without any effectual interruption for more than five hundred years.

Notwithstanding the reign of Lugad, which extended to twenty years, was distinguished by many bloody battles, yet the obscurity which rests upon all the political transactions of this period renders it impossible for us to ascertain the causes that gave rise to these sanguinary contests. Towards the close, however, of his administration, the Hy-Nialls added to the eclat of the nation by assisting the Dal-Riad race to establish a new sovereignty of Scots in North Britain. Several acquisitions had been made by Irish chieftains in Albany, from their first settlement there; but these chieftains having belonged to different rival septs in the mother country; and having been generally engaged in their own family disputes at home, did not regard sufficiently their mutual interests in North Britain; and therefore they were residing in the latter country without any common bond of union. A permanent establishment, however, was ultimately given to the Scots in their adopted country by the enterprising spirit of the six sons of Erc,* who founded that monarchy which not only extended its

* "They were known by the names of the two Anguses, the two Lorns, and the two Ferguses." *Keating.*

dominion, in the course of a few centuries, over the whole of modern Scotland, but transmitted through the house of Stuart, a long succession of monarchs to Great Britain. (*)

Lugad is said, not only to have been indifferent to Christianity, but an enemy to the faith which was professed in his dominions. His death occurred about the year 506, and was followed by an inter-regnum of five years, but from what cause we are unable to ascertain.

A. D. 513. Mortogh MacErea, the next monarch, who was the third in descent from Niall the Great, is remarkable for having lived and died a professor of the Christian religion. Sabina, his queen, had also received the doctrines of the gospel, and had become so eminent for her piety and practical adherence to the faith she had embraced that her name found a place, afterwards, in the calendar of Irish saints. His reign, which lasted for twenty-one years, was, like that of most of his predecessors, a continued scene of bloodshed and civil commotion; and he is said to have been obliged to fight five great battles, in one year, in support of his own authority. It is needless to record that his death was a violent one, though some controversy exists as to the mode of it.

After a reign of nearly eleven years, in which several battles were fought, Tuathal Maolgarb, who had succeeded Mortogh, was assassinated by the foster-brother of Diarmuid, to open the way for that prince to the throne: but the regicide suffered the punishment which was due to his crime, as he was immediately cut to pieces by the monarch's guards.

A. D. 544. On the death of Tuathal, Diarmuid, who

* O'Connor's Dissert., p. 206.

stood precisely in the same relation as the two preceding princes to the celebrated Niall the Great, succeeded to the crown of Ireland; and in the second year of his reign, Fergus and Donald, two princes of the Niallian race, invaded the territories of the Conacians; slew Ollial, their king, and completely defeated the forces of the Western province. In this instance, as well as in many others that have been left on record, it may be perceived that it was usual for the subordinate princes of Ireland to wage war with each other without the sanction or approbation of the monarch. Although his regal supremacy was acknowledged in the nation, it is obvious that his power was greatly circumscribed; and that he was accustomed to act in his sovereign capacity only when called upon by the national voice.

During the reign of Diarmuid a circumstance occurred at a convention of the states, the fatal effects of which were probably not anticipated by the person with whom it originated. A regulation had been made at an early period, which must be admitted to have been of a most salutary kind amongst a people so remarkable for their mercurial temperament as the Irish have been in every stage of their history, that to offer violence to any person at Tara during the convention should be punished by the death of the offender. Cuornane MacHugh, notwithstanding this law, had, in some private dispute, killed another gentleman, and apprehensive of the consequences, had fled to Fergus and Donald for protection: but knowing their inability to screen him themselves from the penalty he had incurred, they sent him to their kinsman, the celebrated St. Columba, entreating that ecclesiastic to grant him an asylum in

his monastery. This, however, was of little avail; for the monarch had the homicide seized and put to death, notwithstanding the influence of his protectors.

This insult offered to a person so popular as St. Columba, aroused his kinsmen, the Northern Hy-Nialls, to take vengeance on the monarch; and under the command of Fergus and Donald they engaged his forces at Culdremni, whom they defeated with great slaughter. Diarmuid himself with difficulty escaped; and the people in general were easily led to believe that this victory was owing to the influence of St. Columba's prayers, rather than to the courage and intrepidity of the forces that espoused his cause.

The loss which the monarch sustained by the issue of this battle was scarcely recruited when he was again involved in a war with Guaire, or Geary, king of Connaught, the latter, in all probability, having refused to acknowledge his title, or to pay the provincial tribute which had been always claimed by the monarch. Having therefore collected a powerful force, he marched along the banks of the Shannon, where St. Comin is said to have used every means in his power, though without effect, to pacify the contending parties, and to bring about a reconciliation. Guaire was inflexible and rejected with determination all the remonstrances of the pious ecclesiastic. Diarmuid's troops, however, having plunged into the Shannon, gained the opposite shore in spite of all the efforts of the Connacians, and by their bravery the latter were compelled to give way in every direction. Finding himself therefore unable to carry on the contest with such a powerful antagonist, Guaire, on the following day, was obliged to surrender himself to the mercy of the monarch.

The ceremony which is recorded as having taken place upon this occasion between the two kings was probable one that was practised on rebellious chieftains when restored to the favour of the monarch against whom they had waged a seditious warfare. It is said that Guaire approached the monarch's tent, and falling on his knees, presented him with his sword, acknowledging his crime and imploring forgiveness. Diarmuid arose, drew the sword from its sheath, and commanded the Conacian prince to lie down on his back; and then, placing his foot on his breast, and the point of his sword between his teeth, he obliged Guaire, in this posture, to confess his disloyalty, and to swear fidelity and obedience during the residue of his life. This ceremony having been performed, a splendid entertainment followed, and these two princes continued in the closest amity for ever after.*

Diarmuid is represented on the whole as a prince of the strictest justice, most sincere piety and unbounded munificence. He was cut off in the year 565, after a reign of twenty-one years, by the sword of Hugh Dubt MacSwiney, king of Ulster, and was interred in the church of Clonmacnoise, near Roscrea, which he himself had founded.

Amongst the numerous persons that distinguished themselves in this age there was none that occupied a more prominent place than the celebrated St. Columba, who is more generally known among the Irish by the name of St. Colum-kille, and to whose popularity we have already adverted. This eminent man was born of illustrious parents,

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*O'Hal. Hist., B. VIII. C. IV.

in that part of the county of Donegal which now forms the barony of Kilmacrenan,* about the year 522. He was a descendant of Niall the Great, and his mother was also of royal extraction, being of a distinguished and princely house of Leinster. He received the first rudiments of knowledge under St. Fridian, afterwards Bishop of Lucca in Italy: and having finished his school education, he put himself under the care of St. Finian, whose reputation as a teacher was at that time of the most extensive celebrity. Under the judicious guidance of this teacher at Clonard, Columba is said to have improved himself so much that his skill in expounding the holy scriptures excited the highest degree of admiration amongst his countrymen. The custom of the age, as well as the natural disposition of his own mind, led him to the formation of those habits which fitted him for a life of seclusion and austerity. Monachism had already taken deep root in Ireland, and was, in the commencement of his career, flourishing in consequence of its numerous professors and learned academical institutions. At Clonard, Columba was therefore assiduously engaged in the study and acquisition of that knowledge which was afterwards so extensively useful to the cause of religion both in Britain and Ireland. Here he became a perfect master of the learned languages, and applied himself with such perseverance and success in the study of theology and other branches of learning, that his

*St. Columba founded an Abbey afterwards in Kilmacrenan which was richly endowed; and O'Donnel founded a small house on the site of the ancient Abbey for friars of the order of St. Francis. Near the village there is a rock on which the O'Donnels, princes of Tyrconnel, were always inaugurated. *Seward's Topographia Hibernica.*

reputation was scarcely inferior to that of the most celebrated men of his time.

Having completed his monastic education, he immediately commenced, with zeal and assiduity, those labours which have rendered his name so justly celebrated. His favourite residence appears to have been a monastery of his own foundation near Lough Foyle, called Doire Calgach, from which the city of Derry derives its name; and such was his attachment to this place, that he is said to have expressed a desire that the trees forming a beautiful grove near the monastery, in which he was accustomed to read and pray, should for ever remain uncut. Journeying southward he likewise founded a religious house at Durragh,* and established such a system of discipline for the monks under his superintendence that they soon became as famous for their learning as their piety, and were thenceforward distinguished by the honourable appellation of *Culdees*, or servants of God.

Possessed as Columba was of a powerful and commanding eloquence, of talents of the first order, and of zeal the most persevering, he rose rapidly in the estimation of his countrymen: and it being impossible that such brilliant parts and splendid acquirements should be confined within the limited precincts of a monastic cell, he was sometimes called forth to settle the affairs of his country, and in this he evinced a decided superiority over his contemporaries. Harassed, however, with the incessant feuds, animosities, and tyrannies of his friends, as well as of his enemies, and stimulated by the ardour of his zeal to make known the doc-

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* Led. Ant., p. 59.

trines of the cross to pagan nations; in the forty-third year of his age he forsook his native land, where he had gained so much celebrity by his talents, and undertook a mission to the unconverted Picts, at that time the most powerful people in North Britain.

Having arrived in that country, Columba was courteously received by his kinsman, Conall, the king of the Dal-Riada; and that prince bestowed on him the *allodium* of the isle of Hy, one of the Hebrides, now called Iona, or Icolumkille, and destined henceforth to become one of the most distinguished seats of learning and religion in the British islands during that and the subsequent age.* Here he established his principal monastery; and thence with his followers, whom he had brought with him from Ireland, he entered the country of the Picts, and by his evangelical labours and apostolic zeal, succeeded in bringing that people to a knowledge of the Gospel of Christ.

After Columba had spent many years in North Britain, it was found necessary for him to visit his native country once more. In the various struggles and contests for the crown of Ireland, which had taken place, many disorders had crept into the government, and the country was much distracted by the great license assumed by some classes of the community. In order therefore to remedy these evils, Hugh I., the reigning monarch at that time, summoned a

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* Dr. Johnson, in his visit to this island, observes:—"We are now treading that illustrious island which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions. That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona."—See *Journey to the Western Islands*.

great national assembly to meet at Drumceat, in the province of Ulster. Of this convention, it is said, that notices were sent to the different princes of Ireland, to Albany, to the Hebrides, and to the Isle of Man: and that the names of the chiefs who attended it are still on record;* amongst whom were Aidan, the king of the Albanian Scots, and Columba, with some of the bishops and clergy who accompained the latter.

The first subject recorded as occupying the attention of this assembly, which continued its sessions for fourteen months, was the reformation of abuses which had crept into the order of *fileas*, who had been a privileged class from the earliest period of the Irish monarchy. In the reign of Concovar MacNessa in Ulster, that prince had saved the order from total destruction by his timely interference: but it was then *that* class of the fileas that were intrusted with the administration of the laws, which, by exceeding their proper functions, had incurred the resentment of the nation. In the present instance, however, it was the bards or poets who had caused considerable disturbance by their arrogance and unprincipled abuse of the privileges of their body.

In the schools of Ireland at this period, poetry, on account of the various kinds of metre which prevailed in the country, was a particular and laborious study. The Irish seminaries, besides having been instituted for the instruction of the higher grades of society, received also a certain number of students who devoted their attention to divinity, history, and poetry; and the immunities they enjoyed induced numbers of idlers to enrol themselves

* O'Hal. Hist., Vol. III. p. 80.

amongst them, who by this means found an opportunity of gratifying both their indolence and their vanity.

During the time of vacation in these colleges, which was from May to Michaelmas, whilst the young nobility and gentry retired to enjoy the society of their friends, the registered students, like the military, were quartered on the country: and such was their insolence, as well as their number, that they became a real burthen and annoyance to the nation. Not content with leading a life of contemptible idleness, these literary mendicants frequently perverted the talent of rhyming which they had acquired, by satirizing those who had neglected to show them the respect which they claimed, or who refused to gratify them in the demands which they were pleased to make upon them.

The monarch's intention at first was to banish these poets from his dominions, as a real nuisance to his people; but at the intercession of Columba he agreed to reduce their number and degrade the rest: and this regulation having been proposed to the assembly, was passed into a law which subsisted as long as the domestic monarchy of the island. The monarch himself, every provincial king, and the lord of every territory, equal to what is called a cantred, were each to retain a poet, in order to record the exploits and preserve the genealogies of their respective families; a salary was to be settled upon these poets, sufficient to afford them an honourable maintenance; and they were to instruct the youth of their several districts in history, poetry, and antiquities. An archpoet, as president, was set over the whole body, who was to examine the abilities and qualifications of the several candidates, on a vacancy, and to nominate those whom he judged to be the most deserving. The

revenues assigned for their support were exempted, as before, from tax and plunder; their persons were also privileged, and besides their stated salaries, they were to be paid for every poem by their patron according to its merits.

But whilst the monarch was thus successful in reforming the abuses which had crept into the schools, he could not obtain the concurrence of the meeting in other matters which were subsequently brought before them. Scanlan More, a chieftain in the district of Ossory, had refused to pay the quota of revenue due by that territory to the monarch of Ireland; and because the son of this chieftain appeared to be more obsequious to his will, Hugh wished to place him in his father's position in the government of that district, and for this purpose had the latter imprisoned. His designs, however, were frustrated by the superior influence and eloquence of St. Columba, and Scanlan was released from prison and restored to his former position and dignity.

Nor was the monarch more successful in obtaining the concurrence of the convention in compelling the Dal-Riad princes in North Britain to pay that tribute which had been exacted from them by several of his predecessors. As Columba was the spiritual father of this people, it was perfectly natural for him to feel an interest in the issue of this question. He therefore represented to the assembly the long disuse of the tribute, the indulgence which had been shown to that colony by former monarchs,—how unnatural it would be for the Irish to wage war upon their own descendants for such a cause as was now under consideration, and the readiness of the Albanian Scots to assist their mother country still with all their forces against an enemy.

All the eloquence, however, of this talented and influential ecclesiastic was lost upon the Irish monarch, and he expressed his determination, notwithstanding the arguments which had been so powerfully urged upon him, to persevere in his purpose of exacting the tribute in question. But although he appeared inflexible on this point, he was unable to prevail upon the assembly to espouse his cause. Through the influence of Columba, as well as owing to the extensive power of the Dal-Riada both in Ireland and Albany, the Albanian Scots were declared independent, and instead of being subjects and tributaries, were ever after to be considered only as the allies and friends of the mother country; and thus, by the decision of this famous assembly, the Irish monarchy was in future to be confined to the precincts of its own island.

The mission of Columba to this convention on behalf of the Albanian Scots, is taken as a proof of the high estimation in which he was held by that people. His extensive labours and genuine piety had established his character for sanctity amongst his followers, whilst his brilliant talents and profound judgment had given him extraordinary influence in the councils and public affairs of that kingdom. His presence, however, at this national assembly in Ireland does not appear to have been the result of any election in North Britain by either the prince, the clergy, or the laity, held for the purpose of appointing their own representative to the meeting, but of the fact of his being by birth an Irish prince, and in that capacity entitled to claim the privilege of being present.

After the business of the meeting was concluded, Columba returned to his monastery at Hy and resumed his

labours: but worn out at length in the service of his Master, he died at that establishment in the year 597, being in the seventy-fifth year of his age.

Having been forewarned, it is said, in his dreams, of the time when his death was to take place, he arose, on the morning of the day before, and, ascending a small eminence, lifted up his hands and solemnly blessed the monastery. Returning thence, he sat down in a hut adjoining, and there occupied himself in copying part of the Psalter, till, having finished a page with a passage of the thirty-third Psalm, he stopped and said, "Let Baithen write the remainder." Baithen was one of those companions who had originally accompanied him from Ireland, and had been named by him as his successor. After attending the evening service in the church, he returned to his cell, and reclining on his bed of stone, delivered some instructions to his attendant to be communicated to the brethren. When the bell rang for midnight prayer he hastened to the church and was the first to enter it. Throwing himself upon his knees, he began to pray, but his strength failed him; and his brethren, arriving soon after, found their beloved superior reclining before the altar, and at the point of death. Assembling all around him, they stood silent and weeping, while the dying saint, opening his eyes, with an expression full of cheerfulness, made a slight movement of his hand, as if to give them his parting benediction, and in that effort breathed his last.

The character of this great and good man is indicated by the success which attended his labours. It is said, that in the early part of his career, his temper was irascible, and that his conduct was haughty and imperious. But

this, if true, which is by no means certain, is only admitting that he was human and that he was not free from those infirmities that are common to our nature. His conduct, however, taken altogether, without dwelling on any particular portion of it with a scrutiny too severe, exhibits to the world a man wholly devoted to the cause of his Divine Master, and one who most cheerfully relinquished his right to an earthly throne, to which he had an undoubted title, that he might extend the limits of the Redeemer's kingdom and propag the doctrines of the cross which he continued to preach w. earnestness and sincerity.

CHAPTER VI.

Monachism in Ireland.

In an age in which it was customary to convert several pagan institutions to Christian purposes, as well as in a country in which Druidism had so long prevailed, it is not surprising that as soon as the people of Ireland were converted to the Christian faith, they should become remarkable for the multiplication and establishment of monastic houses and fraternities.

Monachism had its origin in the east, and was at first confined to the hermits or anachorets, who in the time of persecution had taken refuge in unfrequented caves and mountains, or such other places of concealment as the wilderness afforded for their safety and protection. But about the beginning of the fourth century they were formed into regular communities and had certain rules prescribed for their conduct by St. Anthony; and hence they have been denominated *regulars*, from the Latin word *regula*, which signifies a rule.*

Prolific in the east, the institution soon began to bear abundant fruit in the west, and numerous anachorets were found afterwards in different parts of Europe. In the year 347, when Athanasius was driven into exile by his persecutors, he first taught the hermits of Italy and Rome

* The first orders of monks were under the immediate jurisdiction of the Bishops, but about the end of the seventh century they were exempted from Episcopal rule by the Roman pontiff. *See Du Pin Eccles. Hist., Vol.* 1, *p.* 677. *Dublin Edition.*

to live together in societies. Some time after this, St. Martin, the Bishop of Tours, and maternal uncle of the Irish Apostle, erected the first monastery in Gaul, where the institution made such rapid progress that in the year 400, no less than two thousand monks, from the vicinity of Tours, attended his funeral.*

From Gaul, it is probable, monachism was introduced into Ireland by St. Patrick, who had spent some time in St. Martin's establishment at Tours; and hence, as soon as the institution gained a footing in the island, the multiplication of monastic houses in Ireland quickly surpassed that of any other nation in Europe. It is to be remembered, however, that they were never employed amongst the Irish of this period as the asylums of sloth and indolence, but were rendered a most efficient part of the ecclesiastical machinery in promoting the general interests of religion. "Monasteries," says Dr. Warner, in speaking of those of Ireland, "were the only nurseries of discipline, and the chief schools of learning; and, therefore wherever a bishopric was erected a monastery was usually founded near the site of it; as well for the habitation and support of the Bishop, as of those who were to attend religious offices in the cathedral, or to preach the gospel in the neighbouring parishes. These bodies, properly speaking, were colleges of priests; who, in after ages, were distinguished by the name of secular canons, and were under no vow of perpetual celibacy. Nor was this the case of those only who were settled in cathedral monasteries, but those also known by the name of monks and nuns were allowed to marry when they saw fit. But yet in the histories of those times, all these societies * * * pass

* See Led. Ant., p. 403.

under the general name of monasteries; which frequently misleads the reader to judge of these foundations by those of later ages. From such societies the bishops were, for the most part, chosen; hither they retired as occasion or inclination led them, either for study or devotion; and hence were drawn in general the lower orders of the clergy."

These various schools and colleges of learning, which all seem at this time to have adopted the general name of monasteries, are admitted to have produced some of the most laborious, zealous, and indefatigable missionaries: but this could not have been the object of establishing houses for female recluses, as the latter were most obviously engendered by that predilection for the ascetic life which had so long prevailed in the country during the existence of Druidism.

In imitation of the sisterhood of vestals which had been so long established at Cluan Feart, near Tara, a nunnery was founded by St. Bridget (which was for ages the most prominent one on the island). This celebrated and extraordinary woman was nearly contemporary with St. Patrick himself: and her high reputation, exemplary life, and numerous foundations have rendered her name better known than that of any other religious female in the age in which she lived. Her fame soon spread over every country in Europe, and both churches and monasteries without number were dedicated to her throughout England, France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, as well as in Ireland.*

*It is probable that at one time the greater part of the Western Islands of Scotland were consecrated to her honour, as *He-brides* or *Ey-brides* signifies "the islands of Bridget." *MacPhers. Crit. Dissert.*

St. Bridget was, according to her biographers, a native of the country of Louth, and devoted herself early in life to the austerities of monastic seclusion. She lived for the most part in the nunnery which she had erected at Kildare, or "the cell of the oak," so called, from a very high oak tree which grew near the spot.* This was the commencement of her famous establishment, as well as of the ancient city of Kildare. In order to do honour to her memory, the religious females of that house preserved a perpetual fire which they consecrated under the name of St. Bridget's fire; and which through the connivance of the Bishops of Kildare, was kept burning till the thirteenth century. According to the legend, though constantly supplied with fuel, it never increased in ashes; and to keep it free from any casual pollution, it was surrounded with a wattled orbicular fence, within which no male presumed to enter, whilst the fire was never to be blown with the mouth, but with vans of bellows.

This singular woman, it is said, died about the year 510, in the seventy-first year of her age. Her festival is celebrated on the first day of February; and her mortal remains were probably entombed at Down-patrick,† though that has been as warmly contested as if it was a matter of prime importance to the church and nation.

But whatever some may think of the expediency or

* Illa jam cella Scotice dicitur *Kill-Dara*, Latinè vero sonat *Cella Quercus*. Quercus enim altissima ibi erat, cujus stipes adhuc manet. *S. Brigid. Vita.*

† Cambden quotes the following couplet which fixes upon Down as the place of her interment:—

Hi tres in Duno tumulantur tumulo in uno, Brigida, Patricius, atque Columba pius.

utility of such establishments as that which was founded by St. Bridget, there ought to be but one opinion respecting the celebrated institution of St. Columba in the isle of Hy, to which we have already adverted. It was in the genuine spirit of monachism that he selected an island* for the place of his residence, as it afforded his establishment a considerable degree of protection from the intrusion of visitors and the impertinence of the curious. This island is about three miles in length and one in breadth. The name of Hy, by which it was distinguished by the Scots, is obviously the Gothic Ai or Ei, referring to its oval or egg-like figure. It was named Onas by the Picts, and from both these names was compounded that of Ionas, or Iona, by which it still continues to be called. The name, which was thus accidentally formed, signifying in Hebrew a dove, as Columba does in Latin, did not escape the notice of the learned inmates of that distinguished establishment; and from the remarks of Adamnanus, one of its abbots, it is evident that that seminarywas not without the acquirements of Greek and Oriental literature.†

The venerable Bede, notwithstanding he has taken no notice of the great apostle of the Irish nation, or of his unprecedented success, gives the following account of Columba's mission to the Picts, as well as his profession of the life of a monk: "In the year," says he, "of our Lord's

* A Latin poet of the fifth century writes thus:—

Processu pelagi jam se Capraria tollit,
Squalet lucifugis insula plena viris,
Ipsi se monachos, Graio cognomine, dicunt,
Quod soli nullo vivere teste volunt.

Rutil. Itiner., Lib. I.

† Adam. In Exord. Sec. Præf.

incarnation five hundred and sixty-five, there came out of Ireland into Britain, a presbyter and abbot, a monk in life and habit, very renowned, by name Columba, to preach the word of God to the northern Picts. This Columba came into Britain when king Brudeus, son of Meilochan, reigned over the Picts. It was in the ninth year of his reign, that by his preaching and example he converted this nation to the faith of Christ."*

It was about the time of his death that the mission of Augustine was commenced in England under the auspices of Gregory the Great; and it was in a great measure owing to the Culdees, his followers, that the liberties and religious services of the Irish church were so long preserved and perpetuated in opposition to every attempt that was subsequently made upon them. His zeal as a monk was evinced in the numerous foundations which originated with him in Ireland; but that of Hy seems to have been the most celebrated both at home and abroad. The abbots who succeeded Columba in Hy, were Baithen in 597; Fergnanus in 598; Segienus in 623; Suibney in 652; Cummineus in 657; Failbeus in 669; Adamnanus in 679; Conain in 704; and Dunchad in 710. At length Naitan, king of the Picts, instigated by some of the enemies of this noble order, expelled the Culdees from Hy, A. D. 717; and thus sacrificed the most illustrious fraternity that was then known in the west of Europe.†

* Bede, Lib. III. Cap. 4.

† Education soon became the great object to which the successors of Columba devoted themselves. To them resorted the young from all the adjacent continents;—from Scotland, from Ireland, and England, and even from Scandinavia, to acquire the learning and study the discipline of the Columban Church."—*Scotland in the Middle Ages. By Professor Innes.*

Persecution naturally followed this act of injustice and violence: and in every place in which the Columban monks had been successful in establishing themselves, they were followed by the most relentless intolerance and rancorous opposition. In a charter granted by David, king of Scotland, it is recited that he had given to the canons of St. Andrew the Isle of Lochleven to institute there the canonical rule, and that the Culdees, its ancient possessors, should they think fit to conform to that rule, live peaceably, and in subjection to the canons, might continue there; but if they rejected these terms, they were to be expelled. It could not be expected that men who had evinced such an uncompromising spirit towards any innovation upon the economy of their own church, would tamely submit to such a proposal as this, and they were therefore driven from their establishment.

The paschal controversy which agitated the church at an early period afforded the persecuted order an opportunity of appearing as the strenuous champions of their own ecclesiastical independence. In imitation of the Jewish Passover, the primitive Christians had instituted a similar festival in commemoration of the resurrection. It was at the time of the paschal solemnity, which was celebrated on the fourteenth day of the moon in the first month, that the Saviour of mankind was crucified, and this circumstance determined the Christians to hold their festival precisely at the same time.* The Roman Church, however, conceiving that this mode of celebrating the anniversary of the resurrection was rather adopting the Jewish feast than ordaining a new one of their own, transferred the celebration to the Sunday after,

* Du Pin's Eccl. Hist., Vol. I. P. 74. *Dub. Ed.*

unless that day fell upon the fourteenth. But the Asiatic and African Churches still adhered to the former custom of celebrating the festival according to its first institution.

This want of uniformity in practice soon produced a spirit of mutual recrimination between the two parties; and for a long time continued to agitate the eastern and western churches. Nor was it found possible, notwithstanding the interference of some of the most learned and celebrated prelates, to settle this apparently insignificant dispute until the subject was taken up in the year 325 by the Council of Nice.

As the time of observing this feast depended on astronomical calculation, it was resolved that the Bishop of Alexandria should consult the Egyptian astronomers every year, and make known the result of their observations to the eastern churches; and that he should also communicate the same to the Bishop of Rome, who was to announce it to those in the west. The Roman method of calculation, however, did not agree with the Alexandrian, as the cycle employed in the former contained *eighty-four* years, and that which was used in the latter *nineteen*. Hence the limits of the equinoctial lunation were fixed to different days; and it was therefore impossible to maintain a uniformity between the eastern and western churches in the observance of this solemnity.*

This dispute was carried on for a considerable time with much acrimony, and great zeal was evinced in making proselytes to the respective parties. With the Asiatics, not-

* In the year 417, Easter was celebrated at Rome on the 25th of March, and at Alexandria on the 22nd April.—See *Ling. Ant.*, p. 35, *Note* 63.

withstanding the Roman custom had been sanctioned by the Council of Nice, and its decrees enforced by the command of the emperor Constantine, the British and Irish clergy still adhered to the practice of their ancestors,* and refused to submit to a mandate which they considered as infringing upon the rights and privileges of their respective churches.

Considerable importance was also attached by some of the early Christians to the particular mode of wearing the ecclesiastical tonsure, which did not fail to widen the breach that had been already made by other differences of practice btween the religious litigants of this period. The apparent magnitude of controversial subjects in different ages of the church will be found frequently to vary according to the medium through which they are viewed; and it often happens that the enthusiastic polemic, in the effervescence of his zeal, may be seen imitating a child, who will leave the most serious and needful occupation to pursue the down of the thistle that drives past him. That a controversy could not only exist about a point so intrinsically absurd as that of the clerical cut of the hair, but be pursued with such ardour and interest by men of learning and piety, cannot fail to excite surprise in the present enlightened age of the world. But, perhaps, when the ecclesiastical tonsure is viewed in connexion with the independence of a national church, and when the change attempted to be forced upon the clergy even in this

* Bede's charitable view of their conduct in this instance is mildly exhibited in the following words :—"Utpote quibus longe extra orbem positis nemo synodalia paschalis observantiæ decreta prorexerat." *Bed.*, Lib III, Cap. 4.

trifling matter is looked upon as a mark of their subjection to a foreign power, it will appear in a very different light.

By the Roman monks the upper part of the head was shaved, which was surrounded with a circle of hair in imitation of the crown of thorns put upon the head of the Redeemer, by his enemies; whilst the Irish and British, allowing the hair to grow on the crown, shaved the front of the head in the form of a crescent.* Each party being surprised and shocked at the uncanonical appearance of the other, appealed to antiquity, and to the precedent of their respective founders either real or supposed;† and refused to make the slightest concession upon this apparently trifling and unimportant subject.

The celebrated controversy afterwards on what was called "THE THREE CHAPTERS," which involved an important point of doctrine, served to cast a deeper shade upon the character of the Irish clergy and to furnish their enemies with materials for attacking them, as men who were extensively tainted with fundamental errors. To enter into a particular history of this subject which gave rise to so much litigation in the church would not comport with our present design: suffice it to say, that the conduct of the clergy of Ireland on this occasion, though by no means justifiable, affords the most convincing evidence of their

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* Bed. Lib. III., Cap. 25. Ling. Ant., p. 1

† "Numquid," says Colman, "patrem nostrum Columbam, et successores ejus divinis paginis contraria sapuisse vel egisse credendum est? quos ego sanctos esse non dubitans, semper eorum vitam, mores, et disciplinam sequi non desisto."—*Bed.*, Lib. III. Cap. 25.

irresponsibility to any foreign power in the church, respecting either doctrine or discipline.

The pieces that were distinguished by the name of "The Three Chapters," were certain productions which had been published upon the Nestorian Controversy,* and on which the Irish and Roman churches took opposite sides of the question: and notwithstanding an edict was published in 553, condemning these writings, yet the authortiy of the Council of Constantinople, seconded by that of the emperor, had no effect upon the minds of the Irish ecclesiastics, and they persevered in the view they had originally taken.† Of the merits of the subject of debate we are not called upon to determine.

From the extensive multiplication of monastic establishments in Ireland during this age we may form some opinion of the state of learning and education in the country, as well as of the cause which produced so many men of zeal and erudition that distinguished themselves in almost every country in Europe during the seventh and eighth centuries. The Irish monasteries, as we have already seen, were so many schools of learning and discipline; and their inmates having devoted themselves to the pursuits of lit-

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* See Mosh. Cent. VI, Part. II.

† "All the Irish Bishops," says Cardinal Baronius, "zealously joined in defence of 'The Three Chapters.' On being condemned by the Church of Rome, and finding the sentence confirmed by the fifth council, they added the crime of schism; and separating themselves from it, they joined the schismatics of Italy and Africa and other regions—exalting themselves in the vain presumption that they were standing up for the Catholic faith." *Baron. Annall.*

erature and piety, it was quite natural that they should bring forth abundantly such salutiferous fruit.

Whithout repeating our remarks respecting the literary claims of the ethnic Irish, it must be confessed that the introduction of Christianity amongst the people promoted an extensive improvement in the literature of the nation; inasmuch as the missionaries necessarily introduced the Latin language, though without that purity or elegance which distinguished the Latin writers of an earlier period. In the compositions of the natives themselves, in their own language, there is to be found no indication of their acquaintance with the Greek or Latin classics, as their productions are generally formed on the model of the old fileas,* to whom the classical authors were probably unknown: but they employed the Latin tongue in the study of the Holy Scriptures and of the works of some of the earlier divines in the church.

The ferocious cruelty practised towards the aborigines of Britain by the Anglo-Saxons was peculiarly calamitous to the literature of that country; but the fire having been forbidden to burn on the usual altar, sought every avenue of escape and produced a most salutary effect upon other places. Driven from their own country by the treachery and violence of their former allies, the British clergy found in Ireland a secure retreat from those civil broils which peaceful and studious men are so much indisposed to encounter; and, in return for the hospitality they received, they conferred lasting benefits upon the inhabitants, by assisting them in the foundation and establishment

* O'Con. Dissert., pp. 197, 198.

of their literary institutions.* In the sixth century learning was in a flourishing state in Wales;† as that country could then boast of men of extensive acquirements and literary fame: and the indiscriminate admission of learned men, either Britons or Irish, to the government of monasteries and schools, which was common in this age,‡ would justify the inference, that whatever learning either of them acquired was communicated to the other: for this must have been a natural consequence of that fraternal intercourse which was invariably maintained between the leading men of their respective establishments.

Of the system of education adopted throughout Europe at this time we ought not to think lightly, when we consider the disadvantages under which men were obliged to labour. The Encyclopædia of the Greeks and the liberal Arts of the Romans, which were generally taught in the schools, differed at first in number, but were at length fixed to Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Music, Geometry, and Astronomy: and each of these was formed into an elementary treatise, more or less perfect, according to the abilities of the composer.

The first stage of these sciences was Grammar, which was followed successively by Rhetoric and Logic. These three branches were denominated the *Trivium*,§ and when

* Usser, Primord., pp. 563, 564. Led. Ant., p. 160.

† Still. Brit. Churches, pp. 202–346.

‡ For instances see Led. Ant., p. 164.

§ The *Trivium* was a term invented in the times of barbarism to express the three sciences that were first learned in the schools, viz. Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic; and the schools in which these sciences alone were taught, were called *Triviales*. The *quadrivium* comprehended the four mathematical sciences, viz. Arithmetic, Music, Geometry and Astronomy." *Mosh. Cent.* XI, Part. II.

the young student had completed the study of these and wished to pursue his literary progress still farther, he was conducted slowly through the *quadrivium*, the mastery of which placed him at the very summit of literary honour.

From the writings of Aristotle and his disciples an acquaintance with the rules of Logic was generally acquired ; and by the precepts of that celebrated master, the Logician was initiated into the art of disputation. But the difficulty attendant upon the computation of numbers surpassed that of every thing else in the whole circle of the sciences. To the ingenuity of the Arabians we are indebted for the invention of our present numeral characters, which have so facilitated the acquisition of Arithmetic as to render it familiar even to the capacity of children ; but this was far from being the case with our less favoured ancestors. Being strangers to an invention so valuable, they were obliged to perform every Arithmetical operation with the assistance of those seven letters which were employed by the Romans ; and it must be obvious that in such protracted calculations as difficult problems sometimes require it was almost impossible to form the necessary combinations. Embarrassed by this tedious and difficult mode of calculation, the operator, instead of making use of numerical signs, was frequently obliged to write out at full length the numbers which he wished to employ. The management of fractions also increased his embarrassment, as this was still more difficult, than that of whole numbers ; and the inconvenience of the different plans that had been devised to facilitate the science of computation having been severely felt, a kind of manual arithmetic was at length adopted, in which by

varying the position of the hands and fingers, the different operations were more readily performed.*

In philosophy, as well as in Logic, Aristotle was also followed in the age of which we treat. A very curious work, comprehending all the foregoing arts and sciences, and written in the fifth century by Capella, is said to be still extant; and notwithstanding it could add nothing to the general stock of knowledge in the present day, it is exceedingly valuable, inasmuch as it gives us a view of the literary attainments of the clergy and superior classes in the middle ages. In the sixth century it was in general use in the French monasteries, and it was considered that a perfect knowledge of this work completed the character of the accomplished scholar. From the early intercourse which is known to have subsisted between Ireland and France, it is most probable that Capella was taught at this period, as a classic in the Irish schools :† and this supposition is strengthened by its having been commented upon by Johannes Scotus Erigena, as well as by Duncan, an Irish bishop, who taught in the monastery of St. Remigius at Rheims,‡ and wrote a commentary upon it for the use of his students.

By a perusal of two treatises, written by Bede, one entitled *De Natura Rerum*, and the other *De Temporum Ratione*, may be seen the puerile system of philosophy and physics which was at that time so generally adopted in the schools, and taught by men of the most brilliant talents and persevering application to the study of the sciences. This

* Ling. Ant., p. 330.

† Led. Ant., p. 165.

‡ Lanigan's Eccles. Hist., Vol. III, pp. 403, 405.

eminent writer admitted the four elements of fire, air, water, and earth. The inexhaustible prolificacy of nature, as well as the various properties of bodies, he attributed to the different combinations of these elements, with the additional aid of the four primary qualities of heat, cold, moisture, and aridity. The atmosphere of the earth he supposed to be immediately surrounded by the orbits of the seven planets and the firmament of the fixed stars. From the diurnal motion of the heavenly bodies, which describe concentric circles of a smaller diameter as they approach towards the north, he inferred that the immense assemblage of celestial globes in the stellar regions daily revolves with amazing rapidity round the earth, on an imaginary axis, of which the two extremities are called the northern and southern poles.*

To account for the twofold and opposite motions of the planets, in accordance with the existing theory, was a task too great for the utmost efforts of human ingenuity. It was admitted that the natural direction of their orbits lay from west to east; but as that was not the direction in which they moved daily, it was thought that their progress was constantly opposed by the more powerful rotation of the fixed stars which compelled them to perform a diurnal revolution round the earth in a contrary direction. Being altogether unacquainted with the ingenious invention of epicycles, most of the inequalities observed in the planetary motions were ascribed by this learned monk to the more or less oblique action of the solar rays, by which they were sometimes accelerated, sometimes retarded, and sometimes entirely suspended.

* Bed. de Nat. Rer., Chapters I–VIII.

The sun he supposed to be a globular mass of [illegible] particles, preserved in a state of ignition by perpetual [illegible]tion: and to account for the supply which he would require for the exhaustion caused by the continual emission of the rays of light and heat, he supposed that the losses which were thus sustained were quickly repaired from the numerous exhalations of the ocean situated under the torrid zone.*

Pythagoras had taught, nearly five centuries before the Christian era, the doctrine of the antipodes and of the earth's rotundity; but his theory was not founded on any sound philosophical basis. The Pythagorean hypothesis was also too repugnant to the daily illusions of the senses to obtain credit; and for many centuries that theory was adopted which forms the foundation of the Ptolemean system. This latter, which supposed the earth to be a plane, was defended by many illustrious philosophers, and continued to prevail till Copernicus revived the old one.

The Irish, however, formed an honourable exception to that general prostration of intellect before preconceived notions and erroneous systems, which in the other nations of Europe had become so prevalent. Even at this early period they had not only become acquainted with the sphericity of the earth, but were able so to account for the planetary motions as to show how far they had risen above the age in which they lived.

The destruction of monastic libraries by the northern invaders, and many calamitous circumstances that subsequently occurred, deprive us of the means of giving such

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* de Nat. Rer. Cap. XIX.—For a more enlarged epitome of Bede's philosophy see Dr. Lingard's Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church, pp. 331–336.

a condensed epitome of the philosophy of the Irish as we have been able to present of that of the venerable Bede. A few facts, however, that will appear in our Biographical Notices of Irish missionaries, together with some foreign testimonies, will be found sufficient to justify the statement we have made. "That the Hibernians were lovers of learning," says Mosheim, "and distinguished themselves in those times of ignorance, by the culture of the sciences beyond all other European nations, travelling through the most distant lands, with a view to improve and to communicate their knowledge, is a fact with which I have been long acquainted, as we see them in the most authentic records of antiquity, discharging with the highest reputation and applause the function of doctors, in France, Germany, and Italy, both during this and the following century. But that these Hibernians were the first teachers of scholastic theology in Europe, and so early as the eighth century, illustrated the doctrines of religion by the principles of philosophy, I learned but lately from the testimony of Benedict, abbot of Aniane, in the province of Languedoc, who lived in this period, and some of whose productions are published by Baluzius in the fifth tome of his Miscellanea."

After quoting the testimony, Mosheim adds, "that the Irish, who in the eighth century were known by the name of Scots, were the only divines who refused to dishonour their reason by submitting it implicitly to the dictates of authority: naturally subtle and sagacious, they applied their philosophy to the illustration of the truths and doctrines of religion, a method which was almost generally abhorred and exploded in all other nations."

From this statement of the German Historian, we can perceive the fallacy of the common opinion, that scholastic theology had its origin in the eleventh century, as the Irish divines had cultivated it three centuries before, though condemned and abhorred by the other ecclesiastics of Europe.

On the whole we may learn that in this age, notwithstanding the secluded position of Ireland, it was the prime seat of learning and scientific knowledge to other nations.* Hither the sciences had fled for protection, and were cultivated with a degree of zeal and assiduity unparelleled in an age of general darkness and ignorance. This literary brilliancy by which the west of Europe was so long enlightened, was owing in a great measure to the monks of St. Columba, whose labours were unremitting amidst all the storms which their adversaries were continually raising against them. The Irish monasteries were then the only nurseries of discipline and the chief schools of learning; and their number before the end of the eighth century is almost incredible considering the extent and population of the country.

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* Of Alfred king of Northumbria, Bede, in his Life of St. Cuthbert, speaks in the following manner :—

Scotorum qui tum versatus finibus hospes,
Cælestam intento spirabat corde sophiam.
Nam patriæ fine et dulcia liquerat arva,
Sedulus ut Domini mysteria disceret exul.

CHAPTER VII.

Civil and Military History till the Northern Invasion.

In the history of most countries the principal place is given either to foreign and domestic wars, or to those civil and political transactions in which statesmen are usually engaged, whilst the affairs of the church and the progress of literature are narrated as matters of minor consideration and worthy to form only a secondary subject of detail. But this order will be found to be reversed in the early history of Ireland, as the civil and political concerns of the nation are either altogether neglected or but very imperfectly sketched in its pages, whilst ecclesiastical matters, with the lives and actions of men of learning and eminence in the church, are narrated with such pleonastic detail, that the superficial and unthinking reader might be induced to view them as forming the entire history of the country from the mission of St. Patrick, till the close of the eighth century.

The four monarchs who immediately succeeded Olioll Molt, had received the diadem at Tara, the place that had been set apart by the constitution for the inauguration of the kings of Ireland. But during Diarmuid's reign some criminal having taken refuge in the monastery of St. Ruan of Lothra, and having been dragged thence to Tara and put to death, it was supposed that the abbot had pronounced a malediction on its walls, as from that time the glory of Tara began to be eclipsed, and other places were

appointed thenceforward, discretionally, for conferring the royal dignity and for holding the national conventions.

A. D. 565.—On the death of Diarmuid, Fergus and Donald, the two sons of Murtogh, ascended the throne, and reigned conjointly for one year. During this short period they were engaged in war with the king and people of Leinster, occasioned by the usual source of bloodshed in that province; and in a battle fought at Gabra Liffe no less than four hundred of the Leinster nobility and warriors were killed. Whether the two monarchs were mortally wounded in this engagement or came to their end by natural death, is uncertain; but as they both died at the same time, shortly after, the former supposition is the more probable. Neither is there any satisfactory account of the next three successions, but that Achy the son of Donald, and Baodan the son of Murtogh reigned conjointly for two years, and were slain; that the same fate attended Armirey, the next monarch of the same family, in three years; and that his successor, Baodan II, held the crown but one year before he was treacherously murdered.

A. D. 572. The reign of Hugh I, who was called to the throne on the death of Baodan, is rendered remarkable by the meeting of that great national convention at Drumceat, of which we have given an account in the preceding chapter. After that meeting, and the reformation effected in consequence of its decisions, Hugh seems to have proceeded in his government without much disturbance.

The factions, however, which prevailed at this period and for some time previously, amongst the Hy-Nialls were an inexhaustible source of misery and affliction to the people at large. Divided amongst themselves, this race united

only to disturb the neighbouring provinces; and Leinster in particular felt their oppressive tyranny in the exaction of the long litigated and vexatious tribute. The convention of Drumceat had neglected the imperative duty of applying a remedy to this evil, which they would not have done had the Lagenians had in that assembly such an advocate as Columba proved to be in behalf of the Albanian Scots. Brandubh, the king of Leinster, was therefore obliged to make every effort to defend by the law of arms his own rights, as well as those of his subjects, and having met the monarch's forces at Dunbolg, the latter were cut to pieces, and Hugh himself fell by the sword of Brandubh in the twenty-seventh year of his reign.

By the issue of this battle the northern and southern branches of the royal family were for some time united, under the joint administration of Hugh II, surnamed Slaney, a son of Diarmuid, who reigned in 565, and Colman Rimidh, king of Meath, son of Baodan, who reigned in 568, both of them being lineally descended from Niall the Great. These copartners in the monarchy, we are told, assisted Aidan, king of the Albanian Scots, then at war with Ethelfrid, king of the Northumbrians; while at the same time they were meditating an attack upon his half-brother Brandubh, whom they defeated in the battle of Slabhry in Leinster, and thereby established the Hy-Niall power over all the provinces.

Having thus overcome the common danger, the northern and southern branches of this race revived their old animosities, and satiated their revenge, either in the open field, or by private assassination. The treachery of Conall Guthbinn, prince of Meath, who plotted and executed the mur-

der of the two reigning monarchs, in the sixth year of their administration, gave the nation an utter dislike to the southern branch of the Hy-Niall race; and therefore the northern family obtained the sovereign throne without much opposition.

Hugh III, having been elected monarch, was killed in battle at Da Fertha, near the river Boyne, in the year 612; and the throne was seized by Maolcova son of Hugh I, who held it for three years, when he was cut off by the sword of his successor Suivney Meann, great grandson of the monarch Murtogh; and he again after a reign of thirteen years, by Congal Claon of the Rudrician race of Ulster.

A. D. 628. The first act of the administration of Donald, the brother of Maolcova, who next ascended the throne, was to take vengeance on the prince who had slain his predecessor. He defeated Congal Claon in the battle of Dunkehern, and obliged him to seek an asylum in Britain, where he remained an exile for the space of nine years.

This prince was a man of insinuating address, of the most consummate hypocrisy, and unscrupulous about the means by which he sought popularity. His physical courage could not be called in question, but his moral principle was weak and vacillating. He therefore sought the favour of those amongst whom his lot was cast without much regard to their real worth or his own dignity of character. During his exile he had sufficient address to promote his own designs both at home and abroad; and when the time was come for action, Saxons, Britons, Albanian Scots, and Picts flocked to his standard. His domestic partisans prepared for his reception, and he landed with safety on the coast of Down.

The monarch, however, was not taken by surprise, when his dominions were thus invaded by a motley aggregate of foreigners: and having collected his forces, he encountered the enemy at Moyrath,* and commenced a battle which continued with various success for six days. But on the seventh, Congal's forces began to give way, and were at length not only routed, but their leader himself was numbered amongst the slain.

Encouraged by his success in the defeat of the invaders, Donald was by no means displeased at having another opportunity of taking the field against an enemy whose injustice was calculated to give considerable popularity to his cause. The southern Hy-Nialls having by degrees encroached upon the Mensal Lands of the monarch at Tara, and finding negociation useless, he resolved to have recourse to arms, for the purpose of restoring those lands to the crown. With this object in view he therefore raised a formidable force, and at its head marched into Meath. But the sons of Hugh Slaney, the chiefs of the southern Hy-Nialls, being sensible that their troops were much inferior to the monarch's both in number and discipline, and therefore dreading an engagement, had recourse to St. Fechin, an abbot descended from their own house, that he might assist them by his prayers, or interpose with the monarch on their behalf. Donald, however, rejected the mediation of this ecclesiastic, and was threatened with divine vengeance for his resolute inflexibility: but this menace had little effect upon his mind. Despising the presumptuous threats

* Moyrath, which is now written *Moira*, is situated in the Barony of Iveagh in the County of Down and province of Ulster. *Topog. Hibern., Moira.*

of his enemies as much as he did the imbecile force which had been arrayed against him, he resolved to persevere in the prosecution of the object which he had in view. But the subsequent evening an unusual fall of snow which happened to come on, was taken to be an indication of that wrath which had been denounced by the saint; and an *aurora borealis*, which followed this, convinced even the queen herself that Heaven had espoused the cause of the opposite party. The monarch was therefore obliged to make peace upon the best terms he could obtain, or to carry on the war without troops, as he found his army resolved not to fight against an enemy that had been taken under the protection of a patron so powerful. Articles were accordingly soon agreed upon by the contending parties, and the monarch was obliged to relinquish his design.

A. D. 642. Donald was succeeded by his two nephews Conall Claon and Kellach (or Kelly), sons of his predecessor Maolcova; who governed conjointly for the space of twelve years, when Kellach lost his life by an accident in a bog in the neighbourhood of Trim; and Conall continued to reign alone for four years longer, when he was killed by Diarmuid one of his successors.

The latter prince, in conjunction with his brother Blathmac, now seized on the monarchy. They were the sons of Hugh Slaney, and must have been far advanced in years at the time of their accession. In the month of May, A. D. 665, being in the seventh year of their reign, an eclipse of the sun occurred, which was followed by a very fatal disease called *Buive Chonaill*, or the yellow plague, which carried off great numbers in its ravages, and even the reign-

ing monarchs themselves fell victims in the general visitation.*

Seachnasach, the son of Blathmac, succeeded peaceably to the monarchy, on the death of his father and of his fraternal colleague. But with the exception of some predatory visits paid to the northern province by the Picts, we have no account of his administration, until he was killed in the sixth year of his reign and was succeeded by his brother.

Nor are the four years during which Cionnfala, his successor, swayed the sceptre less barren of historical records.

The county of Down was again visited by the Picts, who, besides pillaging the country, burned the famous monastery of Bangor, and put to the sword or dispersed the inmates of that noble establishment. Shortly after, the monarch himself shared the same fate of most of the Irish kings, as he was killed in the year 675, by his successor.

Fionachta Fladhach, who now got possession of the throne, was the grandson of Hugh I., and a very favourable representation is given of the justice and uprightness of his character. His reign commenced inauspiciously by an invasion of the province of Leinster in order to enforce the payment of that impost which had been so long exacted from the Lagenians by his predecessors. But having been opposed by the provincialists, a battle was fought near Kells, in which the latter were defeated with great slaughter. After the battle, however, St. Moling, the Bishop of Ferns, a prelate of noble blood, went out at the head of

* Keating, Vol. II., p. 135.

his clergy to meet the victors. In addressing the monarch, the Bishop most pathetically deplored the distresses and hardships of his country, and the quantity of blood that had been shed from time to time, for so many centuries, to enforce the payment of a tribute in itself both unjust and oppressive. He observed that its continuance for such a length of time was in manifest antagonism with the express word of God, which declares that the sins of the parents shall not be visited upon the children beyond the third and fourth generation ; and, upon the whole, made such a forcible appeal to the conscience of the monarch that the latter solemnly exonerated the Lagenians from any further demand of this oppressive and iniquitous tribute.

The severe treatment which the people of Ulster and Leinster received at different times from the hands of the Hy-Niall princes induced them frequently to call in the Britains and Saxons to their assistance.* Two princes of the Picts, Cathusach and Ultan, had leagued with the Britons to invade Ireland, but were defeated by the Hy-Nialls in a decisive battle. In about two years after, Egfrid, the king of the Northumbrians, sent an army into Ulster against the Northern Hy-Nialls, where Bertus, who had the command of the expedition, committed great devastations, sparing neither the churches nor seats of learning in his desolating course.† Fionachta, however, came up with the Northumbrians and cut some of them off : but Bertus succeeded in making good his retreat, and carried off most of the plunder on board of his ships.

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* Vide Bed. Eccles. Hist. Lib. IV. Cap. 26.

† "Bertus," says Bede, "vastavit gentem innocentem miserè, et nationi Anglorum amicissimam."

Soon after this defeat of the Saxons, Adamnanus, the abbott of Hy, was sent from the Scottish isles to Alfrid, who had succeeded his brother on the throne of Northumbria, to demand satisfaction for the outrage, which was immediately granted by that prince.

The Irish records mention some other invasions by the Welch and Picts which took place during this age, most probably by the encouragement or instigation of some of the native princes, whose ambition or revenge induced them to meditate designs so inimical to the interests of their own country. Fionachta reigned twenty years, and was killed in 695, when he was succeeded by Longseach the grandson of Donald the second.

This monarch's reign, which continued for nine years, was disturbed by further inroads of the Welch. On the first occasion they were successful in carrying off their plunder, but having subsequently returned they were met by the Ultonians at a place called Magh Cullin, and almost cut to pieces. His reign, however, terminated in the usual way, as he was killed in A. D. 704, at the battle of Carmin, which he fought with Kellach, the son of Ragallach, king of Connaught. His successor, Congal Kinmagher, was his cousin and reigned seven years, during which time he gave many signal proofs of the badness of his heart as well as of the weakness of his intellect.

The interposition of St. Moling in favour of the Lagenians, it appears, brought only a temporary relief to that unhappy and cruelly oppressed people: for subsequently to the expulsion of their foreign enemies, Congal the monarch forced them to accept of some new regulations of his own, which, it seems, were as oppressive as the former.

He is also said to have burned the famous religious establishment at Kildare, and to have been during the whole of his reign an unrelenting persecutor of the clergy. His death, which took place in the year 711, was sudden, but from what cause we are not informed.

Fergall, his successor, followed in his footsteps in his treatment of the Lagenians; and for the purpose of reviving his claim to the vexatious tribute, he invaded Leinster at the head of an army consisting of twenty-one thousand chosen men. Morrogh Mac Broin, the king of that province, having had no previous notice of such an invasion, was able to muster only nine thousand, with which he engaged the monarch's forces at Almhuin, and defeated them with incredible slaughter, the monarch himself, with some of his nobility, being numbered among the slain.

Fogarty, the next sovereign reigned but one year, when he was killed by Kimbaoth, his rival and successor, and he in his turn met the same fate at the battle of Drum Curran in three years afterwards by the hand of Flaherty, the son of Longseach, who succeeded him. To the magnanimity of this monarch Hugh IV. surnamed Allan, owed his elevation to the throne. Having enjoyed the monarchy for the space of seven years, and without any cause but an inward conviction of its propriety, Flaherty resigned the crown with its cares and its honours to a Tyrone prince, over whom he had been victorious in the field; and sacrificed the future grandeur of his family to the prospect of serving his country by lessening the number of competitors for the throne.*

* O'Con. Dissert. p. 215.

From this period a new order of government took place by alternate succession in two royal families, for two hundred and sixty-eight years, in the race of the Clan Colmans newly established, and in that of the Kinel Eogans newly restored. Hugh Allan's reign commenced in 734, and lasted nine years. The tax, known by the name of St. Patrick's Revenue, and which was afterwards collected throughout the kingdom, has been ascribed to this monarch acting in concert with Cathall king of Munster, who made this arrangement better for the support of the clergy, as tithes were unknown at the time in Ireland. Hugh was, however, cut off in a battle near Kells, and was succeeded by Donald III, who governed the kingdom for the space of twenty years, but whose reign was attended with no event of national importance. He had the unusual good fortune to die a natural death, and was succeeded in the year 763 by Niall II, surnamed Frassach. But this prince, it is said, finding himself unable to repress the factions that prevailed in the provinces, like his predecessor Flaherty, resigned the crown in the eighth year of his reign, and died at the monastery of Hy, A. D. 778, where he was buried in the tomb of the kings of Ireland.*

A variety of uncommon phenomena, which are said to have taken place about this time, were viewed by the credulous and superstitious as formidable indications of approaching judgments, and as harbingers of those calamities by which the Irish nation was subsequently so long and so grievously afflicted. We are told that in the reign of Hugh Slancy the appearance of fleets and armies was seen

* O'Hal. Hist., B. IX, Chap. V.

in the heavens; that at a subsequent period a monstrous serpent seemed to float in the air: but in the reign of Niall Frassach those calamities were announced as making a nearer approach by a shower of blood, which fell at Magh Laighion. This is said to have been followed by dreadful earthquakes in different parts of the island; and to these succeeded so severe a famine as to carry off numbers of the inhabitants.

During the reign of Donchad, or Donogh, who was chosen to succeed to the throne on the resignation of Niall, and who enjoyed that dignity for the space of twenty-seven years, he subdued by arms the rebellious provinces which his predecessor could not reclaim by milder measures. His administration lasted till the year 797, when he was succeeded by Hugh V., surnamed Ornidhe, the son of Niall Frassach. Among many of the regulations drawn up by this monarch, was an order in the convention of the states, for exempting the clergy in future, from that military service which they had always been obliged to perform in the time of his predecessors. But his other designs for the good of his country were frustrated by the factious temper evinced in the provinces, and were reduced to practice only when he was able by the superiority of his arms to force his refractory subjects into obedience to his will.

During the civil commotions, an invasion of the Isle of Rechrin to the north of the county of Antrim, by some foreign pirates, is noticed in the annals of Ulster, and, according to Usher* these were the first Danish invaders, whose cruelty and oppression, at a subsequent period, form

* Usser, Primord., p. 958.

such a prominent feature in the history of Ireland. The divided state of the nation and the chronic anarchy, both political and social, which so long reigned in it, gave them a decided advantage over the Irish people, which they did not want either courage or skill to improve until they had made themselves masters of nearly the whole island.

This rapid sketch of the Irish monarchy, anterior to the northern invasion, contains most of what can be gleaned of an authentic nature from the annals of this period; and will be found to justify what we have already stated respecting many of the kings of Ireland, that they have left nothing behind them except their names and most frequently the record of their premarure death.

If it be true that the confusions manifested in the outward condition of a state are but the reflex of the moral disorders which exist in the minds of the citizens, it might be fairly concluded that society in Ireland at this period was thoroughly demoralized; but such an inference would be manifestly contrary to matter of fact. No country in Europe at this time contained within it more sterling and enlightened piety than was to be found amongst the clergy and laity of this island. Their religious establishments —their schools and colleges, and their evangelical labours in other countries, evince that from whatever cause the disorders which afflicted the people might have sprung, they had not their origin in any peculiar state of demoralization to which they had been reduced. Perhaps if the annalists had been more particular in giving us the circumstances which may be considered as the mainsprings of the events which were continually taking place, we might be enabled to form a more correct judgment on the real

state of every particular case. But little that is worthy of record can be extracted from the mutilated history of an age in which the political concerns of the country are so obviously placed in the back ground, and ecclesiastical institutions alone occupy a position so prominently conspicuous. The desolating current of time and the storms of revolutionary changes that have so frequently overswept the island, have carried away much of the evidence of the ancient order of things, and left a fair field for the most absurd and fanciful conjectures; whilst the legendary traditions of saints, and the establishment of religious foundations are all that remain to fill up the chasms that appear in Irish history. These, however, when divested of that miraculous and incredible character which they have assumed in the hands of the mediæval writers, present a pleasing contrast with the frightful picture of party rage, intestine wars, and local distractions, which we are still able to perceive as occupying a place in the politics of the country.

The anomalous combination of extreme barbarism with high literary and intellectual acquirements which the history of Ireland presents at this period, would almost seem to cast a doubt on its authenticity, were it not that we have such incontestible evidence of both the one and the other, as to set at defiance all the cavils of both prejudice and scepticism. The rancorous malignity of contending chieftains, the desolating incursions made by one rival prince upon the persons and properties of the subjects of another, and the unrelenting spirit of revenge which seems to have pervaded most classes of the laity, afford a melancholy demonstration of the former: and, not only the testimony of foreign writers, as well as of the Irish themselves, but the

numerous monuments which the ruins of Glendalogh, Clonmacnoise, and many other places in Ireland, present to the eye of the traveller, evince beyond doubt, that at this period a considerable degree of refinement and civilization must have been attained by those who had the direction of ecclesiastical affairs.*

* "The ancient fields of Glendaloch and Clonmacnoise, the venerable remains of Kildare, and hundreds of other venerable ruins, confirm the legends and traditions of ancient times; although the dwellings of civil strength, the homes of princes, the palaces of monarchs, and the halls of ancient national power have melted away, as the flesh is mouldered from the bones of other generations." Wills's Lives, pp. 159, 160.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Irish Church till the commencement of the Ninth Century.

The ecclesiastical constitution of the ancient Irish, which they maintained as long as their monarchy lasted, was most obviously domestic and independent of any foreign jurisdiction. They acknowledged no superior but the great Head of the Church;* nor had they any rule of faith and practice but the written word of God.

From St. Patrick's ordinations, as well as from the whole history of his mission, it is also manifest that the Irish Church was originally episcopal; its hierarchy including bishops, presbyters, and deacons, or the three catholic orders in the Christian ministry. It is true there were also sub-deacons in it, but this order was only a preparatory step to the deaconship.

The number of Bishops at this early period in Ireland is almost incredible when we consider the extent of the island. But it is to be remembered that the country was divided into innumerable petty toparchies, and that every chieftain had a Bishop or more to preside over the church that he had established amongst his people.† Besides, the

* Unum Caput Christum, unum ducem Patricium habebant." *Vid. Usser.*

† St. Bernard observes at a later period respecting the Irish Church :—" Mutabantur et multiplicabantur episcopi pro libitu Metropolitani; ita ut unus episcopatus uno non esset contentus, sed singulæ pene Ecclesiæ singulos haberent episcopos." *S. Bernard. Vit. Malach.* p. 1937.—But there were no metropolitans in the ancient Irish Church.

Irish prelates were in the habit of conferring the episcopal order on some of their most eminent divines without their appointment to any particular see. This was frequently the case with the heads of schools and the founders of monasteries, so that the number of Bishops in Ireland, it is said, amounted sometimes to three hundred.

To the episcopal order alone the great offices of religion were exclusively confined; and therefore as the extension of Christianity was thought to depend upon their multiplication, every church in its infantile state required a greater number of bishops than when it became more matured and was regularly established. Besides, as the episcopal dignity was lessened in the public estimation by the number of village bishops that existed in early times, their ordination was at length restrained by the canons of different councils. But as these canons had no operation in Ireland, and as no foreign power had as yet been acknowledged by the Irish, as having any authority to compel them to submission or conformity, they continued to preserve the plan of episcopacy established amongst them by their first evangelical instructors, and which they at length relinquished with considerable reluctance.

The number of Bishops that St. Patrick himself is said to have consecrated during his residence in Ireland might appear somewhat surprising on a superficial acquaintance with the history of the infant church in his time. Discretion had guided this eminent missionary in all his proceedings; and his care to avoid whatever could alarm the national pride, or alter the established policy of the kingdom, increased extensively that influence which his piety and zeal had given him over the first fruits of his labours.

Besides the present possessor of a sacred dignity amongst the Druids, a coadjutor, who was also to succeed him, was at the same time nominated; and in imitation of this custom, as soon as the Christian bishop supplanted the Druid flamen in his station and dignity, he also had his assistant and successor appointed; by which means, on every demise, the new pastor was well acquainted with his flock and with his own duty. He was called a Comharba, or partner in the church lands, and ranked as a bishop. Of this order of men several are said to have died in the same see, during the time of St. Patrick's ministry in the island. So that when we reflect on the length of his mission, and the number of those titular bishops that must have been appointed during that time, the consecrations ascribed to him will not appear either improbable or surprising.

The mode in which the Irish Bishops conducted the government and supervision of the Church is illustrated by the antiquities of some of the most ancient sees that were established in this early age. The Church of Aghaboe is noticed by Adamnanus in the seventh century; and it is probable that its circumstances were similar to those of several others existing at that age. Twelve surrounding rectories within an irregular figure, containing about sixty thousand acres, were subjected to its inspection. Residing in the mother church with a few clerks, the Bishop and his assistants were perfectly able to attend to all the sacred ministrations to be performed in his diocese. For this purpose the people were accustomed to assemble at places marked by stone crosses, which became the site of so many churches at a subsequent time.

When a bishopric was once erected, the vanity and ambi-

tion of the sept under whose patronage it was held, were enlisted for its perpetuation; nor was the power of the Roman pontiff himself able, at the time that his authority was acknowledged in the island, to divest them of this right, or to dissolve a see which it was the interest of the sept to preserve.*

According to St. Bernard, tithes were not established in the Irish Church; but besides the tax called St. Patrick's revenue, the clergy were probably supported by those oblations which in primitive times were given in lieu of tithes.† Most of the Irish sees having neither cathedrals, deans, or chapters, were deambulatory. Parishes had their beginning from the suppression of the chor-episcopal sees about the middle of the twelfth century. And, as soon as parochial churches were erected, a portion of the ecclesiastical revenue was set apart for keeping them in repair and for other purposes connected with divine service.

As the Church in Ireland was episcopal, so it was also manifestly independent of any foreign jurisdiction. The controversy about Easter, the ecclesiastical tonsure, and the Three Chapters, afforded her ecclesiastics an opportunity of protesting against any infringement upon their rights, and of evincing their determination to resist the subjugation of their hierarchy to any extra-national power or authority. Several efforts were made at different times to break down that independence, but they always proved unavailing. A

* After the consolidation of Dublin and Glendalough in the 12th century, we find the O'Tooles, the original proprietaries, subsequently retained the title and right of presentation to the bishoprick for upwards of three hundred years. *Led. Ant.*

† Tanquam decimas ex fructibus.—*Cyp. Epist.*, 64.

tract, addressed by Giselbert, bishop of Limerick, A. D. 1090, who was appointed the Pope's legate to the dissident bishops and presbyters of Ireland, was manifestly intended to induce them to comply with the requisitions of the pontiff, and to instruct them in the discipline of the Church of Rome. In the prologue he says, "at the request and even command of many of you, dearly beloved, I have endeavoured to set down in writing the canonical custom in saying of hours and performing the office of the whole ecclesiastical order; not presumptuously but through desire to serve your most godly command; to the end that those divers and schismatical orders wherewith, in a manner, all Ireland is deluded, may give place to one Catholic and Roman office."*

In perfect unison with this attempt was that which had been made, a little before, by Lanfranc, the archbishop of Canterbury, to induce the Irish monarch Turlogh to exercise his authority in bringing about a conformity between the services then used in the Irish Church and those of the Roman communion. He complained to Turlogh of the discipline of the Irish, and desired him to assemble a synod of his Bishops and clergy for the purpose of making those changes which were necessary to assimilate the Irish to the Roman Church. But whilst the archbishop of Canterbury was thus interfering with the concerns of the Irish, he was furnishing to posterity a pregnant proof of the independence of both their church and monarchy, and intimating that neither their ecclesiastical nor civil institutions were subject to the control of the papal legate or even of the pope him-

* Vide Led. Ant., pp. 433, 434.

self. In matters of discipline, the Irish boldy opposed the custom of their ancestors to the authority of Rome, whilst in faith and morals they refused to acknowledge any authoritative standard but the written word of God. They maintained and practised the free and unrestricted use of the Holy Scriptures, inculcated the efficacy of the sacrifice and intercession of Christ, without any intermixture of the superstitions of the dark ages—celebrated divine service in a variety of forms and were governed by a hierarchy composed of married men, who acknowledged no allegiance to any power except to their respective princes.

Notwithstanding the number of pious and learned men that Ireland produced, and who obtained the title of saints during the first ages of Christianity in that country, the monks of St. Columba, from whose ranks they were generally drawn, never dedicated their churches to any of those saints, although of their own order, but to the Holy Trinity.* Spelman mentions his having a psalter, written about the middle of the eighth century, with a prayer annexed to many of the psalms, and that there were *one hundred and seventy-one* such prayers in the book, yet, that not one of them was addressed to the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles, or any other of the saints.†

There is a curious old catalogue of Irish saints preserved by archbishop Usher,‡ which was probably written by one of the remnant of the Culdees sometime in the twelfth century, and which is extremely valuable as it presents us with an epitome of the ancient ecclesiastical history of the country,

* Dalrymple's Collec. for Scotland. P. 248.

† Spel. Conc., Vol. I, p. 219.

‡ Usser, Primord, p. 913.

and exhibits something of the spirit and practices of the clergy during the age to which it applies.

The first class, the writer states, were principally of the episcopal order, and, "were the holiest." "They had one head who was Christ; one leader who was St. Patrick; and one tonsure from ear to ear. They had one mass,* one celebration, and one Easter, the fourteenth of the month after the vernal equinox. Whoever was anathematized by one Church was so by all. They did not reject the attendance and company of women, because being founded on Christ their rock they did not fear the wind of temptation." They continued, he says, from A. D. 433 to 534.

The second class was composed chiefly of presbyters, and were about three hundred in number. "They had one head which was our Lord; they celebrated divers masses, and had various rules; they rejected the society of women, separating them from their monasteries." These continued from A. D. 534 to 598, and, the writer says, "were less holy."

The third was also made up chiefly of presbyters, having but few bishops in it. "They inhabited deserts, lived on herbs, water, and alms: possessed nothing of their own: had different rules, masses, and tonsures, some with their

* In the ancient churches, the public services, at which the catechumens were permitted to be present, were called *Missa catechumenorum*, because at the close of them proclamation was made thus: *Ite, missa est*, sc. *ecclesia*. Then followed the communion service, which was called *missa fidelium*; and which under the name of *missa*, or the *mass*, still constitutes the principal part of public worship in the Roman Catholic Churches." *Murdock*. It is evident that *Mass* in the passage signifies merely the *Cursus* or *Liturgy* used in the Church.

crowns shaven, others with long hair. They celebrated the paschal feast, some on the fourteenth, others on the sixteenth of the month;" and are said to have been "holy."

If the writer of this catalogue was a Culdee, he acted agreeably to the characteristic uprightness of his order, by placing Columba in the second class. But whether he belonged to that order or not, it is obvious that he did not entertain very high ideas of clerical celibacy, or he would have exalted the second and third classes of saints over the first: but it appears that he thought them very inferior in sanctity to those ecclesiastics who "did not reject the attendance and company of women."

Learning and zeal, in the meantime, still continued to give lustre to the establishments of the Irish Church, and in nothing was this more clearly exhibited than in the missionary spirit which seems at this time to have pervaded the whole hierarchy.

About the latter end of the sixth century, Columbanus, a native of Ireland, who had been educated at Bangor, under St. Congall, with twelve companions selected out of the same house, emigrated to France, and founded for himself and his followers the monastery of Luxeuil, in a thick part of the forest, at the foot of the Vosges; to which was afterwards added that of Fontaines,* so named from the abundance of springs existing in the neighbourhood. In this retreat, notwithstanding the Roman custom was observed amongst those by whom he was surrounded, he continued to celebrate the paschal festival according to the practice of his own church. This dissent from the usages of the neighbouring clergy could not fail to bring upon him the censure

* Fleury's Hist. Eccles., Tom. VIII. pp. 18, 19.

of the Gallic ecclesiastics, and they complained to Gregory the Great of the schismatical conduct of this famous Hibernian. Several councils were therefore called, and Columbanus was cited to appear before them; but he refused to abandon the practice of his ancestors. He appealed, however, to the Roman pontiff with great learning, modesty, and discretion, defended his own opinions and those of his countrymen, and at the same time wrote to the Gaulish bishops assembled in council. He observed that the practice of the Irish Church was established by St. John, the beloved disciple, by St. Philip and the Churches of Asia: that it was proved by the calculations of Anatolius, confirmed by St. Jerome; and adds, that "whosoever opposes his authority to that of Jerome, will be rejected as an heretic by the Western Church." But as he still remained obstinate in this particular, he was ruthlessly expelled from his abbey, which he had possessed for twenty years, and banished out of the country.

It was not, however, solely because of his dissent from the Roman Church, that he was treated with such severity, as his faithfulness in reproving the vices of Thierry, the young king of Burgundy, had a considerable share in exciting that persecution against him which was carried to such an extremity.

Brunehaut, the queen dowager, a wicked and vindictive woman, appears to have been the principal agent in exciting the malice and rousing the resentment of her son against this faithful and intrepid champion of religion and morality. On one occasion, when she saw him entering the royal courts upon some business with the king, she brought four of the illegitimate children of the latter to meet him, and

at the same time saying, with the most consummate hypocrisy, "They are the king's children, and are come to ask your blessing." "These children," replied Columbanus, "shall never reign: they are the offspring of unlawful sensual indulgence." This stern reply of the abbot roused the resentment of the queen; and by way of retaliation she succeeded in having some of the privileges of the Irish monasteries withdrawn. But this was not sufficient to satisfy her vindictive spirit, and she soon found other means by which to bring Columbanus into disrepute with the king. The rules of his monasteries were naturally in accordance with those of the house in which he had been educated himself; and by one of these access to the interior of the monastery was restricted. The queen, being aware of this, induced Thierry to assert his right of entrance. At the head of some of his nobles he repaired to Luxeuil; forced his way as far as the Refectory; and, addressing Columbanus, he said, "If you desire to derive any benefit from our bounty, these places must be thrown open to every comer." To which the abbot, with characteristic intrepidity, replied, "If you endeavour to violate the discipline here established, know that I dispense with your presence; and if you now come hither to disturb the monasteries of the servants of God, I tell you that your kingdom shall be destroyed, and with it all your royal race."

Terrified by the denunciation of a man, whom he knew to be a faithful minister of Christ, and reproached most probably by his own conscience for the life of debauchery and lewdness which he had been living, this semi-barbarous potentate withdrew from the monastery; and, instead

of uttering menaces as might naturally be expected, he only observed, "I perceive you hope that I shall give you the crown of martyrdom; but I am not so unwise as to commit so heinous a crime. As your system, however, differs from that of all other times, it is but right that you should return to the place from whence you came Accordingly he was subsequently driven from his monastery by a party of soldiers sent for that purpose by his persecutors; and was accompanied by such of the brethren as were Irishmen and Britons; none of the rest, though willing, being permitted to follow him in his exile.

After travelling through various parts of France and Germany with his companions, he retired at length into Italy, in order to avoid falling into the hands of his persecutors again. Arriving at Milan, at the court of Agilulph, king of the Lombards, he was courteously received by that prince and his amiable consort Theodelinda. Under the auspices of these two royal personages, who at the time were considered as schismatics by the Roman party, he selected a spot amidst the Apennines, and founded there the monastery of Babbio; where he passed the brief remainder of his days, as he died on the twenty-first of November, A.D. 615. He wrote commentaries on several of the Psalms, a book against the Arians, several tracts on the Paschal Controversy, thirteen Homilies, some epistles and poems, a Rule for Monks, and two letters to Boniface III. His severity in addressing the pontiff proved that he had no great respect for the arrogant claims of that ecclesiastic; and he speaks of Vigilius, his predecessor, with bitter and, in some respects, deserved reproach. Besides these productions of his pen, he wrote an apology

for himself, addressed to the provincial synod in France, before whom he was cited to appear for his tenacious adherence to the customs of the Irish Church.

Of this celebrated and distinguished divine, both Cave and Du Pin speak in the highest terms. They represent him as a man of singular simplicity and of unbending and inflexible uprightness, which led him to censure with freedom and sometimes with asperity, the highest dignitaries of the Church. Du Pin, who carefully examined, and with his usual ability epitomized his Works, declares they are written with much wisdom and elegance, and with a profound knowledge of ecclesiastical history.

The next distinguished Irishman, in order of time, though perhaps not inferior to this abbot in worth and learning, was Bishop Aidan, who for a considerable time was an inmate of the monastery of Hy. To the missionary exertions and pious care of this prelate, the conversion of the Northumbrians in the north of England is, under God, to be entirely ascribed. At the same time that Bede gives him an excellent character, as a man of wonderful humility, great zeal and probity, as well as goodness of heart, he adds that his zeal was without knowledge, because he observed the paschal festival according to the custom of his own country, and refused to submit to the authority of the Bishop of Rome. But, notwithstanding this censure passed upon him by the Anglo-Saxon monk, nothing can exceed the commendations which he has given him for holiness of life. He governed the church of Northumbria for almost seventeen years; erected schools for the instruction of men and children in learning and religion; wrote commentaries on the Scriptures, sermons, and homilies; and

was not only an honour to his native country, but a great benefactor to the English nation, as well as an ornament of the age in which he lived. His ministry was personally attended by Oswald, the king of Northumbria; and as he was but imperfectly acquainted with the Anglo-Saxon tongue, the king himself, who at an earlier age had spent much of his time in Ireland and learned the language of that country, became his interpreter to the people. Numbers of Culdees continually arrived to his assistance from Ireland and Hy; and such was their success that the cross of the Redeemer triumphed over the impure rites of Woden, and Christianity was established throughout the kingdom of Northumbria. Aidan died A. D. 651, and went to that reward which awaits the faithful labourer in the vineyard of his Master.

Finan, another native of Ireland, was called from the same monastery of Hy, to succeed Aidan in the see of Holy Island, which had become vacant by the death of the latter; and while in this charge he was the honoured instrument of the conversion of Sigebert, the third king of the East Saxons, and of the retinue that accompanied him to the Court of Oswy. His instructions had also the same success with Peada, a prince of Mercia, and his attendants, with whom he sent some of his clergy to preach to the people of that kingdom. But as the old controversy about Easter was still carried on between the Romanists and the members of the ancient church, and as Finan could not be brought to conform to the Roman custom, a countryman of his own who had been bred in France where that custom prevailed, was considered the most eligible instrument to effect a change in his mind, and

was therefore sent to him for that purpose. This attempt, however, proved ineffectual; and Finan, instead of being convinced, was still more firmly established in his own opinion. He wrote a treatise on the ancient usage of the Passover; was a pious and exemplary man; and departed this life, A. D. 661.

Furseus, a monk, who, according to the predilection of those times, had founded three monasteries in his native country, went over to England to preach the gospel among the Anglo-Saxons; and in his labours met with great success among the inhabitants of East Anglia. Bede extols him very highly, and Sigebert the East Anglian king, who was, as we have already observed, a Christian himself gave him a courteous reception, and promoted with all his influence the object of his mission. He founded a monastery in Suffolk which was largely endowed at several times by the East Anglian kings. He next retired to France where he erected the monastery of Lagny in the Diocese of Paris, near the Seine. He wrote a book on the Monastic Life; and an Irish prophecy is ascribed to him, but without any foundation.

Dinma was another Irish ecclesiastic who made some figure in the Anglo-Saxon Church during the seventh century. He had received episcopal consecration at the hands of Bishop Finan, and took charge of the episcopate of Mercia and the East Angles, which he conducted prosperously for several years: after which he was succeeded by Ceolla, another Culdee, who for some reason resigned his charge and retired to the monastery in Hy. Indeed it is principally to the apostolic labours of the Culdean missionaries that the northern English were indebted for their con-

version; whilst learning and evangelical truth were propagated by their means throughout various other countries on the continent of Europe.*

But whilst the Irish divines were thus engaged in dispensing the word of life to their fellow-men, the Romanists were indefatigable in their zeal to make proselytes to their own views on those points which had been previously the subject of so much controversy. For this purpose Honorius the Roman pontiff, addressed a letter to the bishops, presbyters, doctors, and abbots of Ireland, exhorting them to submission, and a conformity with the practice of the Universal Church. Induced by this epistle to reconsider the part which they had hitherto taken, a synod of the clergy was held at Legh-Lene, near the river Barrow. Lasrian appeared to defend the Roman custom, called in the records of the synod, *the new ordinance;* and Munnu, the founder of an abbey near Wexford, warmly supported *the old rules.* The only action, however, taken by this meeting was to appoint certain persons to visit Rome in order to ascertain if anything further could be alleged to induce the Irish to alter the established customs of their church. These delegates remained three years in that city, and during their residence there were converted to the Roman custom. On their return, to the surprise and mortification of their countrymen, it was found, that they had become the most zealous champions of several other innovations, as well as

* Dr. Lingard, without once intimating that these illustrious men were all natives of Ireland, calls them by the ambiguous title of "Scottish Monk." It is true they were so, but they were Scots from Ireland; a distinction always made by French and other continental writers.

of the adoption of the Roman custom in celebrating the Easter festival.

At this time Cummian, surnamed Albus, or the *White*, who is said to have been a descendant of the same family with St. Columba, retired from every other pursuit, in the monastery of Hy, to examine whatever had been advanced on this subject by Hebrews, Egyptians, Greeks, and Latins. His tract written upon this occasion would, t any time, be esteemed argumentative and learned. Besides his examination of the various cycles that had been previously in use, he quotes the canons of the Church in such a manner as to show that he was well acquainted with ecclesiastical discipline. This treatise, short as it is, comprehends a variety of learned subjects, and clearly points out the studies of the Irish at this period; their advances in literature; and how well their libraries must have been supplied with books on every subject worthy of investigation. But the extensive erudition of this remarkable man had but very little effect upon the men whom he wished to convince. The monks of Hy resented with indignation his defection from the usages of his ancestors, and treated him as an apostate and a heretic,* because he had adopted what they deemed to be the innovations of the Roman school.

Nor did any opportunity occur in which the clergy of the Irish Church failed to discover the same irreconcileable hostility to innovations whenever they were made on their ecclesiastical customs. Dagan, an Irish bishop, who was reputed a man of great piety, and who had taken an active part in the Easter controversy, in a visit which he paid to

* Usser. Syllog. Epist. Hib. Epist. xi. Harris' Writers, p. 31. O'Hal. Hist. Vol. III., p. 115.

archbishop Laurence, the successor of Augustine in the see of Canterbury, finding him opposed to the practice of the Irish in the celebration of Easter, refused not only to eat at one table with him, but even in the same house.* In adopting this apparent want of toleration, the Irish prelate was acting only in conformity with the canons† of his own church, and consequently it may be inferred that the Irish considered all their opponents on this controversy as under sentence of excommunication.

Nor was this the isolated act of one over-zealous ecclesiastic, as both the Britons and Irish acted invariably on the same principle. We have the testimony of Bede that "the Britons would no more communicate with the Anglo-Saxons than with pagans."‡ "The British priests," says Aldhelm, "puffed up with a conceit of their own purity, do exceedingly abhor communion with us, insomuch that they will neither join in prayers with us in the church, nor in communion, nor will they enter into society with us at table; the fragments we leave after refection, they will not touch, but throw them to dogs. The cups also, out of which we have drunk, they will not use until they have cleansed them with sand and ashes. They refuse all civil salutations, and will not give us the kiss of pious fraternity. Moreover if any of us go to make our abode among them, they will not vouchsafe to admit us till we are compelled to spend forty days in penance."

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* Bede, Lib. II. Cap. 4.

† "A communione et mensa a missa et pace." Again:—"Quicunque clericus ab aliquo excommunicatus fuerit, et alius eum susceperit ambo coæquali pœnitentia utantur."

‡ Bede, Lib. II. Cap. 10.

This controversy respecting the paschal solemnity, as may be supposed, proved a considerable obstacle to the labours of the Irish missionaries in other countries; and, after it had been carried on for a considerable time, a synod was called, A. D. 661, at a monastery named Streaneshalch,* in the kingdom of Northumbria, to determine whether the ancient discipline of the British and Irish churches should be retained, or implicit submission should be enjoined in reference to the Roman custom. Wilfrid, an élève of Rome, supported the latter, as Colman, a native of Ireland and educated among the Culdees at Hy, who was then bishop of Lindisfern, maintained the custom of his ancestors. "The Easter I keep," said Colman, "I received from my elders, who sent me bishop hither; the same which all our forefathers, men beloved of God, are known to have kept, and which they celebrated after the same manner: and, that the same may not appear to any contemptible or worthy to be rejected, it is the same which St. John the evangelist and the churches over which he presided, observed."†

This intrepid champion who appeared in the synod at the head of the Irish clergy to defend the custom of his forefathers, having been defeated by a majority who took part with the king when the latter dec ed himself in favor of the Roman usages, resigned his bishopric in disgust, rather than swerve from the discipline of his own church or acknowledge the authority of foreign decrees, and returned to his native country with some English monks as well as

* This was the old name of *Whitby*. See Hody's Hist. of Eng. Coun. Part I. p. 21.

† Bede, Lib. III., Cap. 25.

all the Irish whom he had brought thither, and spent the remainder of his life at a place called Innisboffin. Here he built a monastery for the monks who had accompanied him; but as some dispute arose between the Saxon and Celtic inmates of this establishment, he erected another for the English at Mayo. He wrote a book in defence of his custom of keeping Easter; another on the tonsure of ecclesiastics; and an exhortation to the inhabitants of the Hebrides.

Amongst the distinguished missionaries who were engaged in preaching the gospel in Germany, during the eighth century, was the celebrated Virgilius, a native of Ireland, and whose real name was most probably Feargil, latinized into that by which he was known on the continent.* Having quitted his native land, he arrived in France, where he remained for two years, and afterwards visited Bavaria. Here he laboured for some time in his sacred calling, until a dispute arose between him and Boniface, archbishop of Mentz, whose jurisdiction then extended over that country, as well as over many other parts of Germany. That prelate, who had given orders that such as had received Baptism at the hands of an ignorant priest should be re-baptized, because the formula had been pronounced in bad Latin, was opposed by Virgilius, who insisted that the validity of the sacrament did not depend on the grammatical knowledge of the officiating minister, provided he was duly ordained, and had performed the office in the name of the Holy Trinity. The priest, being ignorant of Latin, had used the words:—"Baptizo te in nomine *Patria, et Filia, et Spiritua Sancta,*" instead of *Patris, Filii, et Spiritus*

* Lanigan's Hist. Chap. XIX, Note 127.

Sancti." This difference of opinion between the Irish and Saxon ecclesiastics led to an appeal to the Roman pontiff; and Zachary had candour enough to decide in favour of the former.*

This decision of the pontiff, which was praiseworthy, considering that Virgilius belonged to a church that did not acknowledge his authority, together with the Irishman's superior accomplishments as a scholar, inflamed the jealousy and roused the resentment of Boniface, and with all the bitterness of religious prejudice he carried on a persecution against his rival. He denounced the Hibernian ecclesiastic to the pope as a man who taught that many of the stars in the heavens were habitable worlds; that the earth was no plane but of a globular form; and that the very part of the earth on which he trod had its antipodes! The pope, in his answer, which was written in the year 748, directed that, if these facts were proved before a council, Virgilius should be degraded. But the Irish divine paid little regard to the papal mandate; nor was he degraded, but was first made Rector of St. Stephen's abbey, by Otilo, Duke of Bavaria, and afterwards Bishop of Saltsburg.

It is remarkable, that what was called heresy in the eighth century has in succeeding ages become the generally received opinion; and, in the present advanced state of astronomical knowledge, the philosophy of the Irish in this century corresponds with the system now adopted by every man of real learning in the world. It is universally admitted that the opinion maintained by Virgilius was no other than the true doctrine of the antipodes, a doctrine

* Epist. Zachar. Vet. Ep. Hib. Sylloge.

founded on the sphericity of the earth, and which, in our days, even schoolboys are acquainted with; but in that age, it was entirely new to the learned men of the continent, and was taught only in the Irish schools.

The seventh and eighth centuries were brilliant periods in the history of Irish literature: and we might multiply biographical notices of the learned men of this age far beyond the bounds which our present object would warrant. But as our design is to give some idea of the state of learning at this early period in the Irish Church, as well as of the zeal, piety, and extensive usefulness of her missionaries, we must content ourselves with those details which we have already laid before the reader; and proceed to enter upon a period the most calamitous and gloomy that the nation had ever experienced from the first settlement of the island.

CHAPTER IX.

First Invasion of the Northmen.

About the close of the eighth century, the reign of Hugh, surnamed Oirnidhe, was marked by the dreadful devastations of those northern pirates who at that period became so formidable to several of the nations of Europe. These foreigners, to whom the names of Danes, Northmen, Ostmen, and Easterlings were common, were a motley aggregate of the descendants of the Goths, composed of Saxons, Frisians, Livonians, Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes, whose proximity to the German sea and to the Baltic gave them an early predilection for excursions on the watery element. The different names by which they have been distinguished prove that they were of various nations, and that they differed from each other in complexion, as well as in their respective manners and habits.

The early history of the Scandinavians, like that of most other nations, is shrouded in darkness; and, were it worth investigation, could not be elicited without considerable difficulty. Even the proceedings of Odin himself, though the main incidents of his life are generally agreed upon, are but dimly seen through the hazy medium of Scaldic tradition, taken in connexion with the well-authenticated history of other nations.

This chieftain, some time in the century immediately preceding the Incarnation, had been forced to seek an asylum in the frozen regions of the north, with a numerous

band of followers of Indo-Scythian extraction.* The success of Pompey and his victorious legions against Mithridates, the king of Pontus, had obliged a number of fugitives to escape from the districts of Armenia, Cappadocia, Iberia, and other Persian provinces, and to withdraw to the more impenetrable regions of Scythia, where they might form settlements beyond the reach of their domineering invaders. At the head of a powerful tribe of these fugitives, a chieftain named Sigge had placed himself; and having led them into the northern regions of Europe, he subjugated the aborigines of each country, as he passed along, and established his sons in the sovereignty of the different kingdoms which he had conquered. Possessing both courage and address, he gave, in this manner, kings to Saxony, Westphalia, Franconia, and part of Russia; and having proceeded as far as Scandinavia, he acquired absolute dominion over Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Encouraged by the success of his arms, and the dismay which pervaded all the nations round the Baltic, he not only superseded their ancient religion, which was probably Druidism, by the introduction of that of his own country, but assuming the title of Odin or Woden the supreme divinity of battle, he claimed and received divine honours from those barbarous princes whom he had subjugated to his authority.

The object of Odin's institutions, as may be learned from the ancient religion of the Saxons and Scandinavians, was to form the character of a warlike people, and to inspire his followers with a contempt of death, as well as a predilection for war and rapine. The substructure of his system

* Snorro's History of Norway.

must have been laid in eastern mythology; but the additions and enlargements of it, which originated with himself, were such as to produce those effects that were intended by his policy. It is said, that when about to die, Odin, having resolved not to take his exit like inferior mortals, assembled his sons and followers around him, and, in their presence, inflicted on himself nine wounds in the form of a circle. Thus having crowned his brilliant achievements by an example of invincible fortitude, he informed them that he was about to return into Scythia, in order to take his place at the banquet of the gods, and that he would be ready to receive there the souls of the brave who should die in the field of battle, with that honour which was due to their courage and intrepidity.

The subsequent history of the nations of the north, for about eleven hundred years, is but imperfectly known. Their principal employment was piracy and war; and, as Odin and his sons were the chief divinities, they were taught to believe that the most pleasing sacrifice they could offer them was the death of an enemy. Most of the northern princes afterwards were reputed the descendants of these chieftains, and the two brothers, Hengist and Horsa, who led the Saxons into Britain, are said to have been the great-grandsons of Odin.*

Inspired with these sentiments, the northerners were invariably prodigal of their blood and ready to embark in any enterprise the danger of which might recommend them to the object of their worship. Hence, the hazards and perils of the deep gave a quickening impulse to their superstition; whilst, by repeated trials, their cupidity was rewarded by

* Bed. Lib. I, Cap. XV.

the booty which they procured or the traffic which they carried on with more southern countries.

But, notwithstanding this became the established character of the Scandinavians, it is difficult to determine the cause which produced, at the time of which we treat, the sudden bursting forth of these barbarians, in such large numbers; covering the European seas with lawless pirates for about two centuries, and which occasioned their different depredations to begin almost everywhere about the same time, and to cease at nearly an equal period. The usual hypothesis upon which this phenomenon is accounted for, is not only defective, but diametrically opposed to matter of fact. It has been asserted that the northern regions are more prolific than those of the south; and that hence the Scandinavian peninsula soon became so overstocked with inhabitants as to oblige numerous colonies to seek, in other countries, those settlements which the excess of population refused them in their own. This assumption, however, is perfectly gratuitous; for it is by no means difficult to demonstrate that population has been, at every period, greater in southern than in northern climates. The cities of the north, even down to the present time, are inferior in extent, and in the number of their inhabitants, when compared with those of more southern countries; and no physical cause can be assigned why it should in any case be otherwise.* Besides the extensive tracts of unre-

* "The Paris *Moniteur*," says the *Toronto Leader*, writing in 1859, has "published recently some interesting statistics regarding the progress of the European populations. One thing appears to be established by these figures; that climate, more than all other causes, influences the progress of population; the highest fecundity being in the south and the lowest in the north."

claimed ground, covered with wood, which Denmark, Norway, and Sweden still contain, exhibit incontestible proofs that they never possessed a superabundance of inhabitants. Had the north been more prolific than other regions, and population been more increasingly numerous in cold than in warm climates, it would still be difficult to say why Nature should deviate so far from her accustomed uniformity as to produce, at one period, such an amazing conflux of people, and not at every other. On the whole, it must be obvious that the supposition on which the extraordinary migrations of the Northmen in this age have been accounted for, is, in the highest degree, unsatisfactory.

Some historians, however, have assigned a more probable reason for this unprecedented movement of the Scandinavian pirates; and have supposed that they were influenced by mixed motives in their predatory excursions upon the sea. The misdirected zeal of the Emperor Charlemagne, (though he was naturally generous and humane,) had induced him to adopt some severe measures against the pagan Saxons in Germany, whom he had previously subjugated. By the most rigorous edicts, as well as by the most unjustifiable military severities, he had obliged them to receive the sacrament of baptism at the hands of his priests, and to make at least an outward profession of the Christian faith. This monstrous injustice and iniquitous method of making converts, very naturally roused the indignation of the Germans, and the more generous and warlike among them fled northward into Jutland, in order to escape the fury of the emperor.* Received in that

* Hume's History of England, Chap. II.

country with cordiality by a people of similar manners and sentiments, and perceiving that the religion of their persecutors was as inimical to the latter as their swords, they soon began to form a general confederacy against both, and to stimulate the natives of their adopted country to concur with them in their enterprises, for the purpose of defending their religion and liberties as far as they were able.* Accordingly they first invaded the provinces of France, where they were known under the general name of Normans; and soon afterwards they found their way into Britain, which groaned for a considerable time under their intolerable cruelties and oppressions.† But as the Irish missionaries had taken such an active part in promoting the conversion of their brethren in Germany, they visited Ireland also in a few years afterwards, and wreaked their vengeance upon the inhabitants of a country that had given birth to such obtrusive and indefatigable ecclesiastics.

A wish for revenge and retaliation may, therefore, have been the motive which at first called forth these formidable hosts from their own frozen and inhospitable regions, but the desire of plunder soon gave an additional impetus to their proceedings. The booty which the first adventurers were enabled to bring back with them to their own country had the natural tendency to induce others to try their fortune in a similar manner. The situation of their native land, and the abundance of materials for fitting up ships with which it was replete, enabled them to prosecute their designs with vigor and success; and being able to sweep

* Mezeray, Hist. de la France, Tom. I, page 165.

† The first appearance of the Danes in Britain was in the year 787. Chron. Sax. page 64.

along the coasts of the neighbouring nations, not in single ships only but in whole fleets, they became the terror of every land that had the misfortune to come within the range of their destructive and unexpected visits.

Enriched by these predatory excursions, and accustomed to brave the dangers of the sea, the Scandinavians continued to pour forth innumerable swarms of fresh adventurers; and such was the effect produced upon the cupidity of their countrymen that even the northern kings themselves were sometimes induced to take a part in these enterprises. In accordance with the general ferocity of their character, their manner of making war was unlike the conduct of a more civilized or generous enemy. They not only pillaged every place which they happened to visit in their progress, but burned or destroyed whatever they were unable to convert immediately to their own purposes. Divided into several independent bodies, according to the ability which they possessed of equipping themselves, it frequently happened that one band of these ferocious adventurers was no sooner gone than another appeared on the coast; and their enterprises being too uncertain and desultory to be met by any uniform and systematic resistance, the inhabitants could enjoy no permenent respite from their incursions. The leaders of these barbarians, moreover, having no authority one over another, (being the respective chiefs of so many distinct piratical associations,) it was impracticable to enter into any treaty with them, unless the natives could multiply treaties according to the number of chieftains or parties that were to be found amongst their invaders.

Nor was this the worst feature of the melancholy state to which Ireland was reduced at this gloomy period of its

history; for the native princes being almost continually at variance with each other, were frequently found acting in conjunction with the common enemy, merely for the purpose of either diminishing the preponderating power of a hated rival, or of taking revenge for some real or imaginary insult. That the miserable defence which the native Irish made against the Danes for so long a period was not owing to any want of courage is evinced by their warlike achievements amongst themselves, as well as by the figure which they made abroad amongst the French, the English, and the Picts. Their own intestine divisions alone produced their weakness, and rendered them an easy prey to a foreign enemy.

The year 795 is that in which, according to some writers, the coasts of Ireland began to be infested with the Danes; and particularly the island of Raghlin,* off thenor thern coast of the county of Antrim, which they plundered and laid waste. About three years after, or in the second of the reign of Hugh Ornidhe, the west of Munster was invaded by a large body of these freebooters called Loch-Lannics, who for some time ravaged the coast, destroying churches and monasteries, and putting all the clergy they could find immediately to the sword. As soon as intelligence of their landing was brought to Airtre, the king of that province, he collected the provincial troops with all possible expedition, engaged them in a pitched battle, de-

* This island has been known by a variety of names. "It is called *Ricnia* by Pliny, *Ricinia* by Ptolemy, *Riduna* by Antonius, and *Recarn* or *Recrain* by the Irish historians; *Raclinda* by Buchanan, *Rachri* by Mackenzie, *Raghlin* by Ware, and *Rathlin* by the modern map makers." *Seward. Topog.*

feated them with considerable slaughter, and forced them to fly to their ships with great confusion and precipitation.

Meanwhile the mutual dissensions of the native princes seem to have suffered no interruption by the danger which now threatened their common country, both in the north and in the south. Instead of summoning the princes of the kingdom to assist him in driving the barbarians from his dominions, the monarch upon account of some dispute which he had had with the people of Leinster, raised an army in the year 799 with which he invaded that province; and with an unsparing hand spread desolation and slaughter amongst his own subjects wherever he went. A practice at that time prevailed in Ireland, as well as in other countries, of compelling the bishops and abbots to attend the royal army during the military expeditions of their sovereign; and amongst others, the monarch was accompanied, on this occasion, by Conmac, the Bishop of Armagh, and Fothadius, a learned abbot, whose great knowledge in the canon laws procured for him the name of *De Canonibus*. The royal army having arrived at the borders of Leinster, Conmac, at the head of his clergy, complained to the king and remonstrated with him upon the impropriety and indecency of seeing the ministers of peace, on all occasions, witnesses of the horrors of war and desolation; and prayed for himself and his brethren in the ministry, as well as for his successors, that a service so unbecoming their sacred profession might not be imposed upon them for the future. The monarch listened to the remonstrance of the clergy with becoming attention and referred the matter to the judgment of Fothadius, who drew up his opinion in writing, in which he stated that a service so unclerical should

not be imposed upon such as were in holy orders; and, accordingly, it was decreed that their attendance in future should not be required, but that they should forever be exempted from this unpleasant duty.*

Whilst a spirit of patriotism appears to have had no influence over the minds of the princes of Ireland in general, the Scandinavians still continued to infest the country, and to direct their rage more especially against the clergy and religious establishments In 802, they entered the Isle of Hy, and set fire to the monastery of St. Columba, when many of the monks were consumed in the flames. About four years after this they entered it again, and such was their rage against the inmates of that once illustrious seat of learning, that, it is said, sixty-eight monks were slaughtered without mercy, and the number of its members reduced to sixty-four. The following year they succeeded in effecting a landing on the west coast of Ireland; and having penetrated as far as Roscommon, they destroyed it, and laid waste the surrounding country.† About the same time, or perhaps something earlier, they made another attempt upon the province of Ulster, where they practised the most wanton and unprecedented cruelties upon the inhabitants. They destroyed the famous abbey of Bangor, plundered it of all it contained, and carrying with them the rich shrine of St. Congall, they slaughtered with savage cruelty the abbot and about nine hundred of his monks. The king and people of Ulster having been roused by the enormities of these barbarians, collected all their forces

* Ware's Writers at FOTHADIUS. *Har. Ed.*

† Ware's Ant., Cap. XXIV.

together, attacked the enemy with great resolution, and after the loss of twelve hundred of their men, they effected, as usual, an escape to their ships.

The imperfect accounts that have been transmitted to us of the numerous and sudden incursions of the Danes do not enable us to give a perfect history of all the outrages which they committed at this period; but it may be observed that their proceedings were invariably marked with the same cruelty and barbarity and were carried on in such a way as to evince more especially their inveterate hostility to the religion and sacred institutions of the country. Nor is it unworthy of notice, that whilst the ravages of the Danes were of themselves an affliction which was almost intolerable, the very elements seemed to conspire with the enemy to complete the ruin of this distracted and unhappy nation. Whilst the remembrance was fresh in the minds of the people of the slaughter and conflagration which had overspread the land, they were terrified with the most dreadful tempests that had hitherto visited the country, and which were attended with consequences the most awfully fatal and alarming. On the northern side of the Shannon, in the month of March A. D., 816, such a violent storm of thunder and lightning burst forth, that above a thousand persons were destroyed by it in one territory. The sea, at the same time, having broken down its banks with great violence, overflowed a considerale part of the country, and swept everything before its overwhelming inundation.

But the most formidable attempt that the Danes made upon Ireland, as well as the most fatal in its consequences, was that which was made about the year 815, by Turge-

sius,* who arrived at that time with a fleet of one hundred and twenty ships, and a numerous force of his countrymen.

Although the whole of the proceedings of this barbarian, both as an enemy and a king, are enveloped in considerable obscurity and present the most gloomy aspect of consummate tyranny and oppression, we have sufficient information to convince us that he possessed much of the craft of a wily politician, and that his plans were laid with such precaution as to insure the successful issue of his perilous enterprise. Apprised of the numerous weak points of Irish policy, but especially of the prevalent divisions of the native chieftains, he employed all his ingenuity and address to gain some of them over to his cause, and to induce them to co-operate with him in his plans for forming a Danish settlement in the country. It is not without reason supposed, that it was by the counsel and assistance of some of these traitors he was enabled to possess himself of many strong positions, in which he was suffered to form settlements with his followers, and to fortify them in such a manner as to render their security as permanent as possible. One thing is certain that he altimately subdued the Irish, castellated and garrisoned their country, and with a triumphant army, for many years, held the sovereign sway in that kingdom.

Turgesius is said by some to have been one of the sons of Harold Harfager, the king of Norway, on whom that prince conferred the regal title and assigned him a part of

* There is a great difference of opinion respecting the precise time of the arrival of this northern chieftain. Ware and O'Flaherty, however, are agreed that it was in 815. *Ware Ant. Chap. XXIV. O'Flaherty's Ogyg., Part III, Chap. XCIII.*

his dominions. But it is probable they have no other foundation for such a conjecture than merely the name of this chieftain. The son of Harold is introduced in the *Icelandic Chronicles*, under the name of Thorgils; but as the Irish did not use H as a letter, except as a mere aspirate,* and were accustomed to drop one where two consonats came together, they made from Thorgils, *Torgis*, which was easily Latinized into *Turgesius*.† These Chronicles, however, made Harold divide his dominions among his sons A. D. 903, which would by no means synchronise with the time of the arrival of Turgesius in Ireland.

No sooner had this chieftain landed in Ireland and been joined by his countrymen, than he set himself to bear down every opposition, and to subjugate the whole island to his dominion. In order to strike the natives with terror, and to engage them to divide their strength as much as possible, he separated his army into different bodies, and disposed of them in such a manner as seemed most likely to produce the desired effect. He also adopted a similar line of policy along the coast, by dividing his fleet into three different squadrons, and ordering all his forces, both by sea and land, to spare neither age nor sex, but to ravage the country with fire and sword wherever they came: a mandate which was punctually obeyed even beyond the letter, by the rapacious barbarians that were under his command.

Whilst these cruelties were being carried on by the common enemy, the spirit of disunion was still producing its melancholy effects amongst the natives. This unhappy circum-

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* O'Brien's Irish Dict. Letter C. Lhuyd's Arch. p. 300.

† See Led. Ant. p. 28.

stance was perhaps as much the result of the aristocratical form of government which prevailed in the country, as of the irascible disposition of its princes and chiefs. Even at this very time, when almost half the island was possessed by the enemy, the monarch of Ireland, instead of joining with the provincialists in attacking the Danes, marched all his forces against some of his own people, and after a troublesome reign of about twenty-two years, was slain in the battle of Defearta by the Conacians.

During the administration of Connor, his successor, which commenced about A. D. 819, the country was perpetually infested by the cruel and persevering ravages of the foreigners. Nor was the worthless prince who had now succeeded to the monarchy likely to give any check to their constant depredations and rapacity. Instead of trying to reconcile the petty feuds of his subjects, he appears rather to have sanctioned them by his own example, as in the face of his bleeding country, he fought a pitched battle with some of the northern chiefs, on the trifling pretext of having received offence, and on no occasion during his reign, which lasted fourteen years, does he appear to have taken any energetic measures to resist the common foe. It is therefore by no means surprising, from the intolerable rage of faction which prevailed amongst the Irish themselves, that wherever the invaders came they were received with joy by the weakest party: for none of the Irish factions of this time made any scruple to join with the common enemy against their own countrymen, provided they had thereby a prospect of either plunder or revenge.

In the meantime the monks of St. Columba in the Isle of Hy, notwithstanding their secluded position, shared

frequently in the sufferings to which their brethren were exposed in the mother country. In one of those predatory invasions made by their pagan enemies, about A. D. 824, St. Blaithmac is said to have been murdered by a plundering party that arrived in that island. He was descended of a royal family in Ireland, most probably some branch of the southern Hy-Nials. Having, however, retired from the world and embraced the monastic profession, he subsequently went over to Hy to visit his countrymen in that establishment; but was not long in the island when a party of Danes approached it. Considering it to be inconsistent with his profession to shrink from danger, Blaithmac resolved, whatever might be the issue, not to think of flight, but to abide in the monastery. Others were induced to follow his example, but such as were unwilling to encounter the impending danger he advised to make their escape immediately. Accompanied by his intrepid companions, he repaired to the church in order to celebrate divine service, and while thus engaged, the Danes rushed into the aisle, and having cut down all that came in their way, came up to him, and asked for the precious metal belonging to the monastery. The sacred utensils, however, of any value had been concealed under ground, and Blaithmac was really ignorant of the spot in which they had been deposited. But believing that it would be a dereliction of duty to plead even this ignorance for the purpose of saving his own life, he replied that he did not know where they were, but if he did, he would not make the discovery they required. The barbarians finding that they were unable to overcome his obstinacy, immediately put him to death,* and thus

* Jan. 19, 824. Colgan. Act. Sanct. at Jan. 19.

conferred upon him the crown of martyrdom, which some think he was very anxious to obtain.

It would be needless to enter into a distinct detail of all the atrocities committed by the Scandinavian immigrants in Ireland, under the government of such a tyrant as Turgesius, who seems to have been completely dead to every good feeling of the human heart. Esteeming it the soldier's right to be indulged in the most licentious excesses, he set no limits to the brutal conduct of his followers; and in their progress, wherever they went, the monuments of munificent piety, the seats of learning, and the residences of princes, were either reduced to ashes or levelled with the ground.*

Meanwhile in the midst of these troubles, Connor, the monarch, after an inglorious reign of fourteen years, departed this life: and the crown devolved, in 833, upon Niall, surnamed Calne, the son of Hugh Ornidhe, during whose reign the same calamities continued to afflict the unhappy inhabitants of Ireland. The northern marauders had been suffered to overrun a great part of Leinster and Connaught; whilst no united effort was made by the natives to oppose them. The Lagenians were the first that seemed to have roused themselves from this lethargy; and headed by their gallant prince, Lorcan, they collected a considerable force, and attacked them at Druim-Conla. The contest was very bloody, and for a long time doubtful; but at length the provincialists were obliged to give way before superior force; and for the first time were the Irish defeated in the field by these aliens, with the loss of the bravest and most enterprising of their troops.

* Ware *ut supra*.

Had the Lagenians been supported by the rest of their countrymen upon this occasion, the result of this desperate struggle might have been widely different; but the time of their deliverance was not yet at hand: and the Danes pursued their victory with increased violence and rapacity. In the south, numerous hordes of these barbarians landed and spread terror and desolation throughout all the southern districts. The city of Lismore was completely destroyed, and its ancient seat of learning, so famous throughout all Europe, with its valuable library, was left in ruins by the savage fury of the relentless enemy. The schools at Clonard and Cashel shared the same fate; whilst such of the clergy as had not concealed themselves were put to the sword without any feeling of mercy. Unlearned and barbarous themselves, the Danes had no respect for learning in other men; and they swept all before them indiscriminately with a cruel and unrelenting fury.

It is said that whilst his country was beset with dangers on every hand, and after a course of the most violent and cruel proceedings, Feidhlim, the dynast of Munster, retired from his throne and embraced a monastic life. This prince, for the gratification of his own ambition and the extension of his power, had taken advantage of the miseries of his country, and had followed with unrelenting ferocity the footsteps of the northern spoilers. Untrammelled by a spirit of patriotism, and completely free from the restraints of religion, he had learned to imitate the ruthless sacrilege of the Danish invaders; and allured by the wealth of the monastic establishments, he had visited those sacred retreats, and, besides laying waste their lands, either slaughtered the inoffensive inmates or carried them away captive and

reduced them to the condition of slaves.* Encouraged by his success and confiding in his military talents, he next revived a dispute between the provinces of Connaught and Munster, about the possession of a territory which is now comprehended in the county of Clare; and having been opposed by the monarch, he not only defeated the royal forces, but entered Meath with an army and carried off Niall's daughter with her female attendants. But his guilty career soon came to a termination. Smitten by his own conscience, and apprehensive that he might be suddenly hurried to his final account, he relinquished his throne, was transformed into an anchoret, and died, apparently, a penitent after all his excesses.†

On Feidhlim's abdication, Olcnubhar MacKinede, the abbot and bishop of Emly, contrived to get himself raised to the provincial throne, without laying aside his episcopal character; and was the first Irish prince in whom the sceptre and crosier were united.‡ This belligerent divine, being concerned for the fate of his unhappy country, about the year 848, attacked the Danes in the country of the Deasies, with a degree of heroism worthy of the sacred cause in which he was engaged. In this engagement the foreigners were put to a shameful flight, after a most frightful carnage, in which they lost two of their chiefs, Tomar and Eric, besides

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* See Lives of Illust. and Dist. Irishmen, p. 175.

† Annals of Innisfallen, at A.D. 847.

‡ It has been stated by some writers that Feidhlim was a bishop as well as a king, but this is a mistake as he never received episcopal consecration, but spent the latter part of his life in religious seclusion.

an incredible number of the flower of their army. The Munster troops also, it is said, suffered considerably; and amongst others, many of the prime nobility of the province fell a sacrifice that day to the fury of the invaders.

In order to secure themselves against any attempt of the natives, the Danes had erected fortifications and castles in different parts of the country, so that if any of those whom they had driven from their habitations ventured to return, they must do so on terms of submission to them.

The Irish perceiving these preparations, and knowing that the Danes were meditating nothing less than a complete conquest of their country, sometimes recovered their ancient spirit and roused themselves from their lethargy; and wherever they engaged the foreigners they were generally victorious. But when once revenge with its lighted torch had kindled the flame of resentment in their breasts, nothing could induce them to lay aside their dissensions, and unite with those who happened to belong to a rival faction against the common enemies of their country. Accustomed to consider a coward as the most despicable of characters, and enthusiastic in their opinion of martial valour, as in their views of family and personal honour, they could scarcely ever be reconciled to each other, after a quarrel had taken place between them. For dreading the charge of a want of courage, should they be the first to make any overture of peace to an opposing antagonist, neither party could be persuaded to come upon any terms of accommodation; and therefore the quarrel continued from one generation to another, and very seldom ended but with the entire extinction of one of the families. Had their government been purely hereditary, many of those occasions of strife and

animosity would have been avoided; but as the monarchy itself, as well as the provincial dynasties, was elective, in a country in which so many families had pretensions that were nearly equal, a spirit of faction was not only engendered and maintained, but from the disposition of the people it was such a spirit as could not be easily appeased.

Surrounded with all those difficulties which the state of Ireland at that time presented, it was not an easy thing for the monarch to determine what line of conduct he ought to pursue. Having engaged the invaders in two different places, and defeated them with considerable slaughter, Niall endeavoured to unite the jarring interests of the kingdom in one common effort to drive them entirely out of the island. For this purpose, it is said, he visited Leinster in the year 846; but coming to the banks of the river Calluin,* which he intended to ford, and finding it swollen to a great height with some heavy rains that had fallen, he directed one of his attendants to try the depth of it, before he would venture in himself with the whole of his retinue. The stream, however, was too rapid, the man was washed off his horse, and a degree of timidity having discovered itself in his attendants, the monarch himself pushed his horse boldly to the side of the river where the man was struggling in the stream; but as the ground had been undermined by the washing of the water, it immediately gave way, and he was unfortunately drowned at a time when his life was of so much moment to his distracted country.†

The premature death of Niall Calne, as well as the dis-

* It is said by the Four Masters that it was from the name of this river the surname of the monarch was derived.

† Vide O'Flaher., Ogyg, Part III, c. 93.

ordered state of the country, rendered it impossible that his successor should be elected with the usual solemnity; but it is generally agreed that Malachy, the king of Meath, and the nephew of the late monarch Connor, was nominated to the vacant throne. This nomination, however, was confined to his own countrymen, for Turgesius himself assumed the title of monarch, and was probably proclaimed as such by his Danish and Norwegian followers. In the various encounters which followed, for they can scarcely be called battles, the Danes, though frequently defeated, had resources which the natives at that period did not possess. Besides the continual influx of their countrymen from their own frozen and barren soil, they were able, by their superiority both in Britain and France, to recruit upon emergencies their forces more expeditiously from thence, than to wait for new succours from the shores of the Baltic. The forces of Turgesius were therefore so numerous and well appointed, that they were able to take the lead of the Irish, and to carry on the war with considerable advantage. The vanqusihed natives, in addition to the loss of their property, were compelled to relinquish their liberty and submit to be governed by the will of their conquerors. Under a government established in this manner by a pagan tyrant, the religion and liberties of the nation were speedily overturned, and she herself divested of her chiefest ornaments, sat like a forlorn, disconsolate widow in her weeds. The native Irish were forced into captivity, and such as remained were obliged to conceal themselves in the woods and deserts in order to escape from the grinding oppression of their foreign masters.

The haughty tyrant, who was now acknowledged mon-

arch by his own followers, having brought the whole island into subjection, endeavoured, with the tenacious grasp of a falcon, to keep possession of that authority which he had acquired, and for the purpose of giving stability to his power he introduced a new order of things amongst the inhabitants of the oppressed and unhappy country. Every district in the island, in which an Irish Taoiseach or lord, resided, was obliged to entertain a Danish chief under the title of king,* to whom the native chieftain was compelled to submit, and from whom he was to receive orders upon every subject connected with the government of the people. Into every town or parish, besides its old magistrates, was placed a military captain; every village had a sergeant, and in every farm-house a private soldier was lodged. The sea coasts of the country were ravaged wtih impunity, by sending different parties round the island in boats, and it is impossible to depict the various forms of misery and oppression which the helpless inhabitants were obliged to undergo. Fire and sword, rape and plunder, violence and captivity, marked in every place the usurpation of Turgesius; whilst the apparent impossibilty of emancipating themselves from this galling yoke, contributed most extensively to break the spirit of the Irish and to sacrifice their hopes upon the altar of despair.

As pillaging adventurers, the Danes had, from the beginning, sufficiently proved their barbarity; but at length their oppressions and exactions began to assume a sterner and more peremptory aspect from the license of authority. In order to collect the revenues with which the monasteries

* Warn. Vol. II, p. 101.

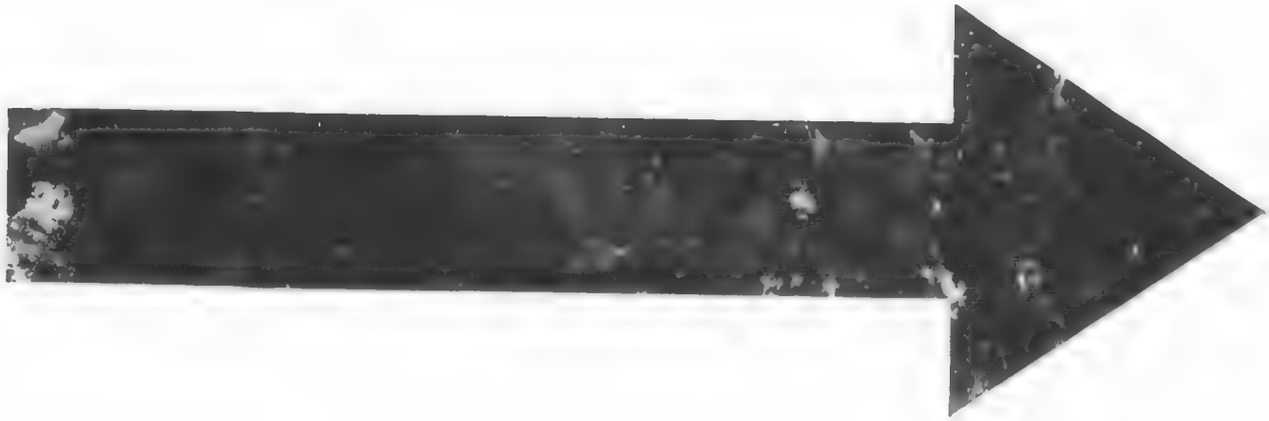
had been endowed, a Danish agent had now his residence in every one of them that had not been reduced to ashes, and even near the ruins of such as had been destroyed. The bishops and clergy were obliged to conceal themselves, and all orders in the state were entirely laid aside. The different literary establishments with which the island abounded were filled with soldiers; churches and monasteries with heathen priests; and a country, which was formerly so celebrated in other lands for the learning and zeal of its ecclesiastics, was rendered a theatre of the most barbarous and revolting cruelties which the minds of savage oppressors were able to invent.

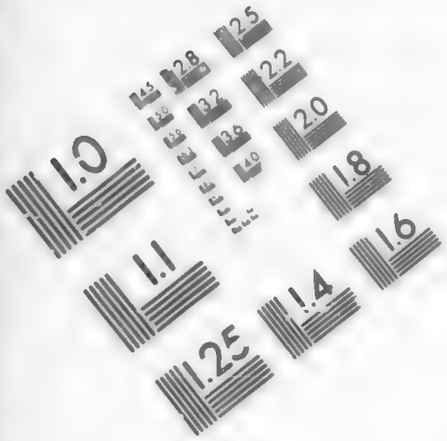
The nation which had been shorn of her strength and deprived of her right by her former civil broils and contentions, was now unable to make any resistance to these accumulated evils; and might be compared to the solitary oak that throws out its shattered and unprotected branches against the full sweep of the tempest. All the books that could be discovered by the barbarians were either burned or torn to pieces; religion and letters were interdicted; and the inhabitants were not permitted to teach their children to read, or any other useful or ornamental accomplishment. Even the decencies of society and of domestic life were trampled under foot; and every bridegroom was obliged to purchase the virginity of his bride from the Danish captain of the district, by a certain tax imposed upon him on the day of his marriage. No man, whatever his rank in society might be, could call anything his own of all his possessions. His cattle, his corn, and all his provisions were at the disposal of a rapacious soldiery. As one of the Danish military was quartered in every house and cottage throughout

the kingdom, he was not only a spy upon every action, word, and look of the inmates, but the absolute master of the house and of every person in it. The rightful owner was not permitted to sit down to his meals in his own habitation, nor partake of the fruit of his own industry, till his military guest was satisfied; and whatever might be the wish of the latter, his entertainer dared not refuse him, as such a refusal would expose him to consequences that might be fatal to himself and to his family. The natives were not allowed to kill even a chicken, or make use of a little milk, until liberty from the resident soldier was first obtained; and neither the sufferings of the diseased, the supplications of the needy, nor the cries of infancy itself, could soften the hard and obdurate heart of this inhuman and inexorable tyrant.*

Before the spirit of the Irish was completely subdued, several of them had refused to comply with the demands of these oppressors; but the soldiers of the neighbouring houses, having joined together, dragged the recusants by violence to the nearest guard, and there, under the most cruel circumstances, they were imprisoned, until they had made satisfaction to their guest for their disobedience, and promised to be more obsequious for the future. None of the gentry or nobility was permitted to wear any clothes, but such as the Danes had first worn out and laid aside; and the sons of the Irish chiefs were forbidden the use of arms, lest at any time they might be prompted to make some effort for the emancipation of their afflicted countrymen. The very ladies themselves became the subject of

* See Warner, Vol. II., pp. 102, 103, &c.





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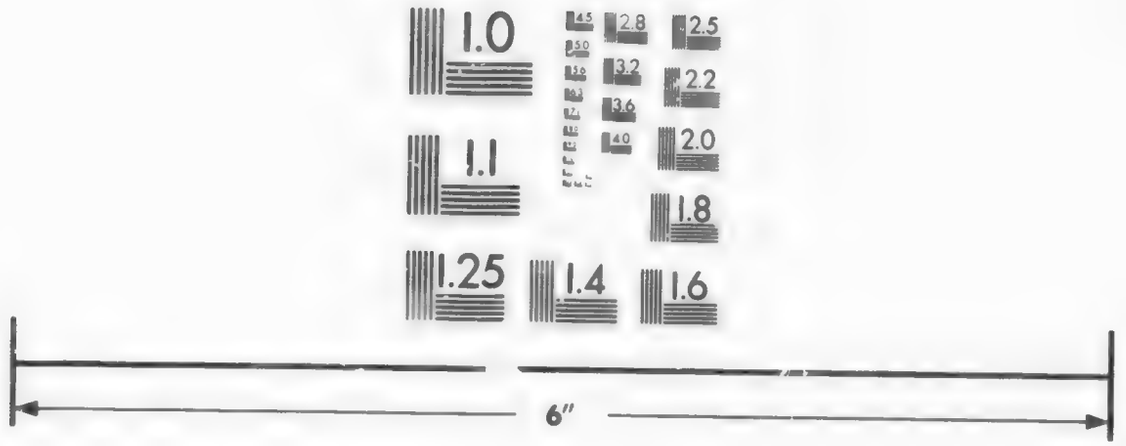

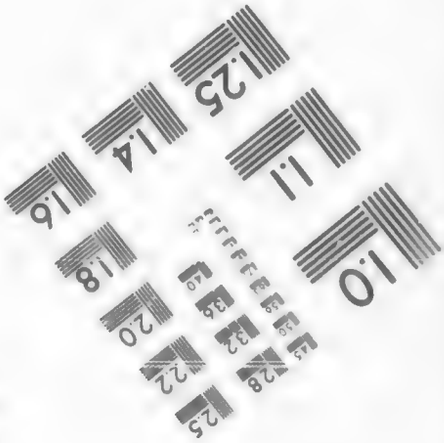

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Danish legislation, and were not permitted to work with the needle, or to receive an education suitable for their station in society. The master of every house in the land was obliged to pay an annual tribute to certain receivers appointed by Turgesius, and this was exacted with so much rigour and cruelty, that such as were remiss in the payment, whether through inability or otherwise, were to forfeit their noses,* or become slaves to their ferocious oppressors.

This mere outline of the intolerable state of bondage in which the native Irish were held at that period, is in perfect accordance with the records of the times, the colouring and incidents which it presents being by no means heightened in the sketch we have given. Like the pestilence under whose malignant influence joy is blasted and nature sickens, the Scandinavian power continued for many years to harass and oppress the afflicted inhabitants of this unhappy island. But the days of the northern tyrant were already numbered; and his oppressive cruelty, by a retributive providence was subsequently visited upon his own head.

Malachy had for a considerable time been meditating the deliverance of his country, but by what means it was to be effected he was unable to determine. The Danish police, as well as the constant dissensions among his own people, raised insurmountable obstacles in his way. It appears, however, that he kept upon some terms of intimacy with the tyrant, lest he should be suspected and his designs be altogether defeated. It is said,† that, on one occasion, he proposed a question to Turgesius, most probably to deter-

* Hence this tax was called *Airgid-Srone*, or "nose-money." OHal., Hist., B. X., Chap. III.

† Cambrens. Topog. Hib. Dist. iii. C. 42.

mine the line of conduct which he ought to pursue. "What," said he, "shall we do to clear the country effectually of a parcel of foreign birds, lately come among us, and that are of a most pestiferous nature?" Ignorant of the real tendency of the question proposed, and never imagining that the Irish monarch designed to apply it to himself and his followers, the Danish chieftian replied, "If they build nests you can never hope to root them out without destroying their nests everywhere." The hint was not lost upon Malachy, for he saw at once that in order to root out the Scandinavian power from his dominions, he must destroy the castles and strongholds which his enemies had erected in the land.

A. D. 859. Meanwhile Turgesius, in the course of his predatory excursions, entered Armagh, and seized upon Forannan, the Bishop of that see, together with the clergy of the city and the students of the college, and had them conveyed to the Danish fleet in Limerick: but by some contrivance not authentically related, he was in the same year made a prisoner, by Malachy, and by his orders was drowned in Loch Annin contiguous to the tyrant's own residence.

There is a romantic story told of this transaction,* upon the authority of Cambrensis, which like much of what that writer has stated respecting Ireland, is most probably but a mere fabrication. It is said, that accustomed to the most passive obedience, and wantonly indulging every lawless passion, Turgesius had conceived a most dishonourable pas-

* Dr. Warner has given a detailed account of this event in his history, vol. ii. pp. 104–107; but neither the Four Masters, the Annals of Ulster, or of Innisfallen have anything about the fifteen beardless young men by whom, it is stated, Turgesius was made prisoner.

sion for Melcha, the Irish monarch's daughter, and that he had found means to make his desires known to her; but his proposals were rejected with disdain. He next addressed himself to her father, and demanded her as his mistress at the hand of that monarch; but Malachy, who would have resented this offensive and indecent proposal with a becoming mixture of indignation and abhorrence, had circumstances permitted, suppressed his resentment and counterfeited compliance for the time; in order that he might with the greater certainty bring ruin and destruction upon his enemies.

Malachy, in whose breast neither patriotism nor ambition was a predominant passion, had now all the feelings of a father lacerated; and those passions, which neither the love of his country nor of glory could move, burst forth and issued in deep and deadly projects of revenge. He was not deficient in abilities, genius, or courage; and in order to carry his project into effect, he requested of Turgesius two days to prepare his daughter for entering the mansion of that pagan usurper. In return for this act of condescension, he engaged that she should be accompanied by fifteen of the finest virgins in Meath, whom he might dispose of among his principal favourites. This being conceded, Malachy retired to his palace, to consider more at leisure the conduct he should pursue. The shortness of the time, as well as the number of Danish enemies who had established such a perfect system of espionage in his kingdom, could not deter him from the undertaking which he now proposed to himself. With the utmost secrecy, he therefore procured fifteen beardless young men, who were enthusiastically attached to the cause of their oppressed country: and these, disguised in female attire, having each of them a dirk con-

cealed under his garment, were to accompany the princess to the residence of the Danish tyrant. He, at the same time. ventured to call together a few of his most faithful adherents, and communicated to them his intentions. Despatches were also secretly sent from prince to prince and from one chieftain to another, directing them everywhere to fall upon the Danes simultaneously, on the day appointed; that by such means they might be unable to afford assistance to each other.

The fatal evening arrived, and the princess with her attendants proceeded to the castle of the Dane; whilst the Irish monarch prepared with his forces to follow. The young men had previously received instructions, that at the moment they saw the Dane advancing towards the princess, they should seize and bind him, but by no means take his life. A sign was agreed upon, and, when given, the gates were to be burst open, and Malachy and his party were to rush in, and to put the garrison to the sword. All this plan was therefore carried into effect; and the foreign tyrant was led in fetters from his mansion amidst the exultations of the Irish party, who had so successfully executed the orders of their legitimate sovereign.

Nor were the princes and chieftains in other parts of the kingdom remiss in obeying the orders which they had received. The Danes everywhere fell a prey to the enraged Irish; and in a short time, it is said, an armed Dane was not to be seen in the land. Their castles were demolished, their strongholds taken possession of, and in the presence of the remnant of his people who had by some means escaped the general slaughter, as well as in the presence of the Irish, Turgesius was thrown into Loch-Annin, bound hand and foot, according to the monarch's directions.

CHAPTER X.

The Second Danish War.

The death of Turgesius was an event which produced an extensive effect upon Irish affairs. A convocation of the states was assembled and the monarchical crown was solemnly as well as gratefully secured to Malachy; and, for a time, peace and liberty were restored to the inhabitants of a long oppressed and almost ruined country. In a short time the kingdom was cleared of these hostile bands, who had hitherto infested it, and had been chiefly sustained by the energy and political talents of their leader. Such of the surviving foreigners as were unable to effect their escape to their ships were obliged to seek for quarters at the hands of natives. The clergy, who had concealed themselves during the usurpation of the tyrant, came forth from their hiding-places, and several of those that had fled to the continent returned to their native country. The churches and religious houses which had been demolished were rebuilt; the seats of learning were restored; and such works as had escaped the fury of the oppressors were carefully collected by the vigilant industry of the remaining ecclesiastics.*

But whilst in this convention all the ancient rights of both the princes and the people, as well as all the functions of the goverment, were restored, there were no efficient measures adopted for securing the public safety from foreign

* O'Hal. Book X, Cap. IV.

invasion; and the consequence of this omission they were soon obliged to lament.

A temporary peace, however, having been happily restored to the country, the people everywhere rejoiced in their newly-recovered privileges. Had they only learned by their recent calamities the fatal effect of their own dissensions, the evils of their late subjugation would have been attended with the most salutary consequences. But, unhappily, the Irish were not a people that received instruction even from their own experience; and, aware of this unfortunate propensity, the Danes, notwithstanding they had been so signally vanquished, returned in the year 849 with a fleet of one hundred and forty ships, and renewed the contest.* This invasion is what is called by some Irish writers "the Second Danish War;" but, in fact it was like the former made up of a variety of petty wars and rencounters, which lasted for the space of nearly a century and a half.

The native princes, the scanty circumference of whose actions was always bounded by their own personal or local interests, had soon lost that sense of a common danger with which the recent circumstances of their country might have fully impressed them. Accustomed to view nothing beyond the narrow circle of their own immediate connexions, and like the niggardly wretch whose aims are all turned inward and meanly terminate upon himself, they were ready at all times, on the slightest call of private passion, to desert the public cause, and to league with an enemy whose object was the general ruin of the nation; provided such

* Annals of Ulster, A. D. 848. Ware, Ant., Cap. XXIV.

a coalition only promised to gratify their own immediate ambition and revenge.

Nor was this disposition confined to the inferior toparchs, whose petty dissensions had embroiled their respective territories in interminable strife and animosity; but even the monarch himself, instead of endeavouring to add a more vigorous tone to the activity of the nation, and thereby to repair the decays of its enfeebled constitution, was sometimes obliged, from the pressure of untoward circumstances, to avail himself of the ready arms of the common enemy, and by this means to retain his station against the encroachments of some of his own tributaries. This state of affairs could not fail to give a decided advantage to the foreigners, who, during the protracted struggle which ensued, employed every means in their power to increase amongst the natives the fiery tumults of feverish excitement, and to ally themselves with the stronger party in every broil, that they might accomplish their own purpose through the instrumentality of their enemies.

For a short time after the restoration of their government no opportunity occurred to induce the native princes to take the field against each other. But at length, even in the sight of a returning enemy, they began to indulge this fatal propensity; and it was probably owing to this cause, that the monarch was obliged to make peace with the invaders the year after their arrival, and to employ them in an expedition against some of his enemies.

During the course of that tedious and indecisive warfare which was kept up so long between the natives and the foreign settlers, and in which some slight alterations took place in the mutual feelings and relative position of the

parties, the character of the latter was changed from that of a horde of pirates and robbers into the more respectable form of a number of trading and commercial colonists. By various means, they had sufficient address to obtain possession of the principal maritime stations in the island, and to secure those advantages of which their more simple neighbours, the Irish, seem to have been completely ignorant. But the permanence of their security was soon disturbed, and rendered for a time exceedingly precarious, by the cupidity and love of plunder which existed amongst some of their own countrymen in the north.

The shores of the Baltic, as we have already seen, were most prolific in adventurers, whose predilection for rapine, both by sea and land, gave an effective impulse to all their movements; but they were of distinct races and tribes, and, though always ready to unite with each other for the sake of mutual advantage, they had their own interests and pursuits respectively, which they were unwilling concede to a rival clan even of their own countrymen.

The Norwegian tribes, hitherto the principal people that resorted to the Irish coasts, were called by the natives *Fin*-gals, or White Foreigners, whilst another description of Northmen, little known in Ireland till about the middle of the ninth century, were denominated *Dubh*-gals, or Black Foreigners. In the year 851, Dublin, which was possessed by the former, was attacked by a considerable body of the latter, who arrived on the Irish coast, and plundered this settlement of their countrymen with the greatest rapacity. The following year a party of these marauders entered Armagh upon Easter Sunday, and the depredations which they committed on that occasion are conjectured to

have caused the death of Diermod, the bishop of the see, which is recorded as having taken place that year. But the Fin-gals having collected their forces, and received reinforcements from their native country, attacked the intruders with such spirit, that they regained the city of Dublin; and, in a battle which lasted for three days and three nights, the Dubhs were completely defeated and slaughtered without mercy.*

Notwithstanding these predatory visits to Ireland were attended with much danger, the foreigners do not seem to have been intimidated by the losses which their countrymen so frequently sustained. Scandinavia had an inexhaustible store of materials for shipping; and its hardy sons were naturally possessed of an invincible spirit of enterprise. About the year 853,† therefore, a Norwegian prince named Amlave, or Auliffe, accompanied by his two brothers, Sitric and Ivar, arrived in Ireland, and was hailed as their chief by all his countrymen, by which means he was enabled to exact contributions from the native inhabitants. Such, however, was not the ostensible purpose for which he directed his course at first to the shores of this country. If Cambrensis can be credited, the three brothers fitted out a considerable fleet loaded with merchandise in which a great quantity of arms were concealed; and, in order to avoid exciting the suspicion of the Irish, they

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* Ware, Ant, Cap. XXIV.

† "Auliffe, the King of Norway's son, came this year into Ireland, accompanied in that expedition by his two brothers Sitric and Jobhar. The Danes and Norwegians submitted to him, and he was also paid tribute by the Irish."—*O'Reilly's Translation of the Annals of Innisfallen.*

divided themselves into three squadrons. One sailed up the Shannon to Limerick, commanded by Ivar, who having waited on the King of North Munster, and presented him with some rare curiosities, obtained permission from him to settle in that city, for commercial purposes. Under a similar pretence, Amlave was allowed to take up his residence in Dublin, and Sitric in Waterford.

Having thus obtained a footing in Ireland, the northern chieftains paid their court with the utmost assiduity to those princes in whose territories they had severally settled. They soothed their passions, entered into their interests, and promised them their aid whenever it was required. Allured by these artifices, and far from suspecting their intentions, the Irish princes permitted them to purchase land, and to erect castles and strongholds for their own security. But instead of proving the friends and allies of their respective patrons, as they had promised at first, they soon began to entertain hopes of acquiring the same authority over the Irish as their predecessors had enjoyed. Such was the insolence with which they subsequently acted towards the native inhabitants, that in the year 856, Malachy was obliged to raise a powerful army and to give them battle. Great numbers were slain on both sides, but the Danes were completely vanquished, and the greater part of those that were quartered at Dublin were put to the sword. The monarch, however, did not long enjoy the fruits of his victory, as, after a reign of trouble and vexation, he died in the year 863; and by the assistance of Amlave and his followers, Hugh Finley, son of the monarch Niall who had been drowned in the river Calluin nearly seventeen years before, contrived to succeed to the vacant throne.

But notwithstanding Hugh was indebted to Amlave for his elevation to the monarchy, it does not appear that he considered himself bound thereby to the foreigners by any ties of amity or friendship: for, in three years after his accession, we find him joining Kieran, the son of Ronan, and the Kinel-Eogain, or people of Tyrone, in a battle against them, near Lough Foyle in the county of Donegal, in which, victory crowned the efforts of the Irish, and they came off triumphant with the heads of two hundred and forty of the northern chiefs.*

Nothing intimidated by the disastrous issue of this engagement, the foreigners, in three years after, under the command of Amlave, entered Armagh, and, after plundering the churches and sacred places of all that was in them, burned the town and killed or captured about one thousand persons.†

But amidst these calamities, which were continually coming upon their common country, the Irish princes found frequent opportunities of waging war upon each other, and of evincing a spirit of revenge as diabolical as that which was exhibited by their ferocious invaders. Taking advantage of the absence of Amlave and Ivar in North Briton, in the year 870, the monarch, by no means softened by the misfortunes of his people, laid waste the Lagenian territories from Dublin to Gowran; and, as the Danes knew well how to take advantage of those times in which the people were engaged in preying upon each other, the consequences might have been fatal to himself, had not Amlave died the

* Annals of Innisfallen, at A. 866.

† Ibid., at A. 869. Ware Ant., Cap. 24.

following year, soon after his return to Ireland with a fleet of two hundred ships. By this event Ivar became the chief of all the Northmen in that country; but he also ended his earthly career about two years after the demise of his brother, and so left their mutual projects to be carried out by some other of their countrymen.

Meanwhile the Danes of Dublin,—taking advantage of the defenceless state of Munster, while Donogh, the son of Dubhdavorean, king of Cashel, and Carroll, prince of Ossory, were laying waste Connaught,—entered the southern province and plundered and destroyed the Momonians wherever they arrived. Little more is recorded respecting the events of this reign, till the death of the monarch, which happened on the 20th of November in the year 879.

Instead of employing their time in securing and fortifying those places that were so frequently visited by the marauding foe, the rulers of the Irish nation had contracted such a propensity for military enterprise, that they could not resist the temptation which a little respite from their foreign enemies presented to their view: and no sooner was Flann Sionna, the son of Malachy, chosen to succeed the late monarch than, for some cause which is unknown to us, he invaded the province of Munster, which had been sufficiently harassed before by the Danes. The provincial king, having been taken by surprise, was quite unprepared for this hostile invasion of his dominions; and his subjects were, in consequence, plundered without mercy, and many of them carried away into captivity. The king of Ulster was, about the same time, murdered in an inhuman manner by his own subjects; and several other cases of cruelty

tarnished that period, in which the country was enjoying a little respite from the atrocities of their foreign enemies.

Notwithstanding the Scandinavian power was at this time gradually diminishing, the Northmen were still able to embroil the natives in continual trouble and embarrassments. In the year 884 they entered Kildare, and, after plundering it, carried away Suibhne, the prior, a prisoner to their ships, besides two hundred and eighty other persons.* In three years after, they laid waste and pillaged Ardbraccan, in Meath; and about the same time they engaged the forces of the monarch and gained a complete victory over them. A few years subsequently, they plundered Kildare again, laid waste Clonard, and, having entered Armagh and set fire to the town, they carried off with them seven hundred and ten captives. They were, however, defeated by the men of Tyrconnell in an engagement, in which two of their chieftains, named Amlane and Gluntradna, were slain.†

It would be impossible to pursue these ruthless incendiaries through all the scenes of murder, rapine and desolation in which they were so often engaged; as they lost no opportunity that was afforded them, either by the factions of the natives, or by the crazy state of the government, to carry terror and destruction into every part of the country that lay open to their incursions.

The most celebrated prince that flourished in Ireland about this time was Cormac Mac Cuillenan, of whose talents and piety much has been said by the writers of the period in which he lived. He was born about the year

* See Lanigan's Eccles. Hist., Vol. III., p. 346.
† Annals of Innisfallen, A. D. 896.

837; and was of the Eugenian branch of the royal house of Munster; but of his juvenile years we have nothing recorded. It is obvious, however, from his literary acquirements, that his youth must have been spent in the retirement of a collegiate life. Before his elevation to the throne of Munster he had been consecrated Bishop of Cashel; and thus united the crosier with the sceptre, as he continued to retain the episcopal office to the end of his life.*

Some time after Cormac's accession to the throne of Munster, which took place in the year 902, we are informed that the monarch Flann, accompanied by Carroll, king of Leinster, marched an army towards the southern province and laid waste the whole country between Gowran and Limerick.† The cause of this outrage was a quarrel which had taken place between the Momonian and Lagenian princes, in which the latter had applied to the monarch for redress but the former had refused to yield to Flann's determination.‡ Cormac, however, instigated by his confidential adviser Flaherty, the abbot of Inniscathy, an eloquent, artful, and ambitious man, set out with the forces of Munster and marched into the country of the south Hy-Niall. Apprised of this movement of the Momonian army, the monarch lost no time in collecting his troops, and quickly met the invaders on the heath of Moy-Lena, in the King's County. The battle soon commenced, and Flann was defeated by the provincialists, and was obliged to give hostages to Cormac for his future line of conduct

* See Lanigan, *ut supra*, p. 349.

† Annals of Innisfallen, A. D. 906.

‡ O'Con. Dissert., p. 232.

towards the Momonians. But the troops of the latter made an insolent use of their victory, for they proceeded westward towards Roscommon; and, having ravaged that country and plundered the island of Lough-Ree, together with a fleet that lay there, they compelled the Conacians and some of the Hy-Nialls to submit and give hostages. Even the king's own hereditary domains in Meath did not escape their resentment.

A. D. 908. Goaded by the insolence of a triumphant ecclesiastic, the monarch of Ireland made every effort to repair his disgrace. In conjunction with the princes of Connaught, Leinster, and the south Hy-Niall, he raised a great army and met the forces of his enemy at Ballymoon, in the county of Carlow. The troops of Munster were completely defeated in the battle which ensued; and Cormac himself was killed, together with a great number of chieftains and nobles; besides about six thousand of his followers.* His head was carried to Flann, after the battle, by some of the soldiers; but that generous prince, far from enjoying a spectacle so disgusting, ordered those that brought it out of his presence, wept over it, and, according to some, went even so far as to kiss it. He then commanded his body to be sought for, and when found, it is said, that it was conveyed to Cashel and interred there.†

There is much, that is fabulous connected with both the life and death of this royal ecclesiastic. Some state that he was killed by the Danes; others that his death was

* Annals of Innisfallen, A. D. 908.

† Ware, *ut supra*.

occasioned by his falling with his horse down a precipice made slippery by the blood of the slain; while a third party assert that he did not engage in the battle at all, but, having retired to pray for the success of his army, he was put to death by a herdsman who happened to come up at the time.*

This celebrated prince, who was reluctantly drawn into collision with the monarch by the belligerent abbot of Inniscathy, has been considered as one of the most eminent men in Ireland at this period. His historical remains, entitled the Psalter of Cashel, in which he treated of the history and antiquities of Ireland, were in the hands of Sir James Ware and of several antiquarians of the seventeenth century;† but are now probably lost, with the exception of some fragments that have been preserved by the industry of later writers.‡ The beautiful little church, now called Corm c's Chapel, which stands on the rock of Cashel, and which is certainly one of the most curious of Irish ruins, is said by popular tradition to have been erected by this prince. But whether it was intended for a cathedral, for which it appears to have been too small, or merely for a royal chapel annexed to the residence of the king, which was situated also on the summit of the rock, is a matter which we are now altogether unable to determine.

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* See Ware's Bishops, at *Cormac.*

† Ware's Ant., Cap. 21, and Bishops of Cashel: CORMAC.

‡ The Psalter of Cashel "has been considered as of the highest authority, and was still extant entire in the 17th century, and is probably so somewhere at present; although I know only of some parts of it which are to be found." *Lan. Eccles. Hist. V. III., P.* 355.

Amongst the prisoners that were taken in the battle in which Cormac lost his life, the abbot of Inniscathy, the principal instigator of the war, was the most distinguished.

It is said that the people of Leinster were so much exasperated against him for his conduct that they upbraided him, as he was led along, in the most opprobrious language.

He was imprisoned and treated with considerable severity during the life of Carroll. When released from his confinement, he retired to his monastery and continued there till the throne of Munster became vacant by the death of Cormac's successor, to which he was then called as the next heir.*

The monarch Flann, a short time after his accession to the throne, had espoused Malmaria, the widow of his predecessor, and the daughter of the famous Kenneth Mac Alpine, the king of the Albanian Scots.† By her first marriage she had become the mother of Niall Glundubh,‡ who, in 916, succeeded Flann, after a long reign of upwards of thirty-six years. This prince came to the throne with considerable advantages; but these were counterbalanced by fresh invasions from the Northmen to aid their friends, already too powerful in Ireland. The unsound policy of Niall's predecessor had given the foreigners full leisure to establish their power; and, as they clearly perceived, from the dissensions that prevailed amongst the

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* Warner, Vol. II., p. 138.

† "By this alliance with each of the main alternate branches of the Hy-Niall family, the Tyronian, Clancolman, and Slanian branches were re-united, to the exclusion of the Tyrconnel branch." *Wills' Lives*, c., p. 184.

‡ O'Conor's Dissert., p. 234.

native princes, that the times were favourable to their designs, they only waited for reinforcements from their own country, to attempt the reduction of the kingdom once more to a state of slavery and subjection.

Buoyant with hope and sanguine in their expectations, the Northmen soon fitted out a fleet and directed their course to the shores of Ireland. A part of them arrived in Ulster; but they were quickly met by the monarch at the head of a considerable force. In the battle which ensued, the foreigners were defeated with great slaughter. The victorious natives, however, purchased the day very dearly, most of their principal officers and the flower of their troops having fallen in the combat. The following year a fresh party of Danes entered the harbour of Dublin; and, having been joined by such of their countrymen as could be mustered upon the occasion, they invaded the province of Leinster and spread terror and desolation everywhere around them. A battle was fought between them and the provincialists on the plains of Kinfuad, near Timolin, in the country of Kildare,* in which the Lagenians were defeated with great carnage; and many princes and nobles of the greatest distinction were sacrificed to the fury of the invaders.

Animated by the success which attended their arms, the Scandinavians invited more of their countrymen to their assistance, and having received fresh supplies from the shores of the Baltic they began to contemplate the entire conquest of the kingdom. Their fleet, which appeared in the harbour of Dublin, in 919, was commanded

* See Seward's Topog. Hibern : KINFUAD.

by Godfrey, the son of Ivar, to whose superior capacity they had been indebted for their late victory. Uniting therefore all their forces, they attacked Dublin with incredible fury, and, after a gallant resistance, that city was taken sword in hand, and the garrison cut to pieces without any quarter.

These uncommon successes of an enemy whom the natives had seldom engaged without a certainty of victory soon alarmed; all the provinces and the most hostile factions began at length to coalesce in support of their common country. Ivar and Sitric, who commanded the foreigners, having changed their operations into a defensive war, made strong entrenchments about Dublin, which was their capital hold, and were resolved to abide the issue of any attack of the native Irish. But the monarch, in attempting to take the city by storm at Kilmosamog,* had the whole of his forces cut to pieces, and lost his own life in the attempt.

The death of the monarch, however, was amply avenged on the enemy in the following year by Donogh, the son of Flann Sionna, and the second monarch of that name, who had succeeded to the imperial government of the kingdom. When called to the throne he gave some indications of spirit and energy, but his people were subsequently disappointed in their expectations respecting him. Having collected and reinforced his troops, his first care was to lead them forth without any loss of time against the common enemy of his country. Elated with their recent successes, the Danes were by no means unwilling to engage in the

* Kilmosamog was formerly a church and parish which lay S. W. of the city.—*O'Con. Dissert.*, p. 236.

contest. They even marched into Meath to meet the monarch's forces; but were routed in so complete a manner, notwithstanding the great abilities of Ivar their general, that their loss in this battle amply compensated for that of the Irish in the preceding year.* In order to cut off their retreat, Donogh dispatched flying parties that intercepted them in their flight. He succeeded also in destroying all their garrisons and strongholds, so that nothing remained to them in Leinster and Meath but the city of Dublin, which was too well fortified, and had a garrison that was too formidable for him to attempt its reduction at that time.

Meanwhile the province of Munster was greatly disturbed by the collision of different parties who contended for the throne. Had a spirit of patriotism, in the slightest degree, influenced the minds of these belligerent factions, they might have easily settled their disputes in a more amicable manner than by shedding the blood that ought to have been expended in the expulsion of their oppressors. But, amongst the most extraordinary characters of this time, Ceallachan, who ascended the provincial throne during the reign of this monarch, and Murkertach, or Murtogh, the roydamna of the kingdom, occupy a prominent and conspicuous place.

Having obtained the crown of Munster to the prejudice of Kennedy, the son of Lorcan, Ceallachan was called at once to repel the bold and insolent incursions of the Danes. He called his chieftains together, exhorted them to arm everywhere against the foreigners, and, at the head of the

* Annals of Innisfallen, at A. D. 920.

forces of Munster, defeated the Northmen in two battles, one in the country of the Deasies and the other in Ossory, in which two thousand of their troops were killed.* In these and several other engagements which followed each other rapidly, the advantage was on the side of the provincial troops; and in one of them the wife and sister of the Danish general were taken prisoners, and were treated by Cealla-chan with great politeness till their release. By these misfortunes the Northmen were reduced to such difficulties that the greater part of them at length relinquished the province of Munster and joined their countrymen in Dublin and its adjacent territories, appointing Sitric their general, to be their king.†

But notwithstanding these partial efforts on the part of the king of Munster to oppose the Northmen in the southern province, he appears to have been no real friend of his country. Destitute of those high principles of rectitude which lend an ornament to grandeur, and make even royalty itself more magnificent, he not only sometimes leagued with the common enemy, but was frequently found imitating that sacrilegious example which they had set him by the plunder of the temples of the most High, and the oppression and persecution of those who had devoted themselves to his service. Possessed of a considerable degree of craft and insinuation, he contrived to render himself popular; but the whole of his career is marked with that abject subjection to his own domineering passions which indicates a bad man and a worse ruler. Having pillaged the venerable

* Ibid., at A. D. 914.

† Warner, Vol. II., p. 141.

monastery of Clonmacnoise, he invaded Meath in the following year, in which he was assisted by the Danes; and without any regard to that veneration with which sacred things should be always esteemed, this sacrilegious chieftain plundered the abbey of Clonenagh and the church of Cillachin, or Cillaice,* from both of which he carried off the abbots.

The conduct of Ceallachan forms a striking contrast with that of Murtogh, the roydamna, by whom he was checked in his career of violence, and reduced to a condition of the most abject humiliation. This latter prince, who was the son of Nial Glundubh, had signalized himself as much by sacrificing every just resentment to the interests of his country, as by the numerous splendid victories he obtained over its enemies. Generous and sincere, he sometimes laid himself open to the artifices of the designing, and Ceallachan endeavoured to ensnare him by negociation, but he became the victim of his own treachery. Murtogh having entered his territories, seized upon his person, and with a numerous train of other captives led him to Tyrone, and delivered him a prisoner into the hands of the monarch. This brave prince, of whom has been justly said, that "of all enemies, he was the most generous—of all commanders the most affable," †—was killed at Ardee, in a battle with the Danes, and his rank as roydomna devolved on Congalach, the son of Maolmitheach.

The history of Ceallachan and of his military exploit forms a prominent feature in the records of those times,

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* Seward's Topog. Hib. CILLAICE.

† O' Con. Dissert. p. 238.

and, had his character been untarnished by his own selfish passions, these exploits would no doubt have placed him very high up in the list of fame. It is said, but upon very questionable authority, that Sitric, with the approbation of the monarch, formed a deep-laid conspiracy, under the pretence of a marriage with his sister, to get the king of Munster into his hands, and succeeded in the attempt. But the Momonians, having collected all their forces, marched first to Armagh, and afterwards to Dundalk, whither the royal prisoner had been removed; and after a most desperate naval engagement at the latter place between the Danish fleet and that of Munster, the latter succeeded in rescuing their king and brought him back in triumph to his dominions.*

For some time after the accession of Donogh, the reigning monarch, he had raised the expectations of his people, and they hoped that he would prove the deliverer of his country from the iron grasp of its foreign oppressors; but in this they were dreadfully dissappointed. He had it in his power to do much towards this desirable end, but he had neither the courage nor the patriotism to make the effort. He acted merely as a passive spectator while his dominions were being plundered, his people oppressed beyond measure, and every thing that was holy or valuable in the land was becoming a prey to a ruthless horde of barbarians. The people themselves, it is true, sometimes rose with resistless energy against their oppressors, but they received no encouragement from the example of their monarch. One of the most remarkable instances of desperate bravery on the part of the populace occurred in the reign of this monarch at the

* O'Hal. Hist., Book XI., Chap. III.

great annual fair held at Roscrea on the 29th of June A.D. 942. As the concourse of people was always great upon such occasions, the Danes of Limerick and of Connaught entered into a conspiracy to attack them suddenly, and after a general massacre to make themselves masters of the booty which they reasonably expected to find then in the place. At their approach to Roscrea, under the command Olfinn, one of their most ferocious and daring leaders, the people were unsuspectingly engaged in their usual pursuits. They had, however, owing to the danger of the times, in some measure prepared for a treacherous attack by arming themselves for their own defence. The first intimation they received of the proximity of the Danes, was from some flying peasants of the neighbouring country; and they instantly resolved to meet them manfully, and stand in their own defence. They therefore received the attack of the enemy with firmness, and returned it with such vigour and impetuosity that the Danes were thrown into confusion, and by following up the impression they had made, the Irish soon reaped the reward of their bravery; and their opponents abandoned the field, leaving, it is said, no less than four thousand of their number dead behind them, among whom was Olfinn, their daring and ferocious leader.

By the sudden death of Donogh, the monarch, after a useless reign of twenty-five years, the throne of Ireland being left vacant, Congalach, a grandson of Flann Sionna's on the mother's side, and the sixth in descent from Hugh Slaine, succeeded, in 944, to the monarchy. His close connexion with the Tyrone and Cian-Colman families facilitated his accession to the sovereignty of Ireland, although his family, by his father's side, had been excluded from that

honour for two hundred and seventeen years. Roderick O'Cananan, who was then at the head of the other excluded house of Tyrconnel, was a man of great genius, and possessed of sufficient power to support those pretensions which he had set up. For some time he joined with Congalach in carrying on a war with the Danes; but after they had laid waste Dublin, and killed an incredible number of foreigners in the field, he turned his arms against the monarch himself, drove him out of his hereditary country of Meath, got himself, by a military election, proclaimed king of Ireland, and received the homage of some of the provincial princes. He next marched his forces to Dublin, where he obtained a signal victory over the Northmen; but Roderick was accidentally slain at the close of the victory.*

Relieved from the usurper of his regal dignity, Congalach hastened to take vengeance on the people of Munster for their ready submission to Roderick. But not having made a sufficient provision for the security of his possessions at home, the Danes of Dublin, taking advantage of this neglect, plundered and laid waste the country of the Hy-Nialls without mercy. As soon as the monarch was informed of these proceedings, he returned from Munster to drive off the invaders; but he drew upon himself the arms of Domnall O'Niall, who had hitherto refrained from all hostility towards him. At length the Leinstermen and

* Annals of Innisfallen at A.D. 950.—"The Four Masters," says Dr. Lanigan, "assign this battle to 948. They swell the number of the Northmen that fell to 6,000, too great a multitude, I think, for the battles of those times."—*Eccles. Hist., Chap.* xxii. *Note* (141.)

the foreigners of Ulster and Leinster, having entered into a conspiracy against him, he held a council of his followers on the banks of the Liffey, and marched thence to the city of Dublin. Here the Scandinavians amused him with a show of submission to his demands, and their policy had the desired effect. But falling upon him unawares at Toi-Gioghrana, they slew him, and cut to pieces a considerable part of his army.

Congalach was an active and enterprising prince; but the period of his government, which lasted upwards of twelve years, was one of constant disturbance, principally through the unceasing activity of the Danes; but also in a great measure, in consequence of the dissensions that prevailed amongst the Irish princes themselves. He was capable of rendering great services to his country, had not his accession to the throne, contrary to the established usage of the kingdom, involved him in difficulties which rendered his reign unfortunate. Of the last six years of his administration the records are imperfect; but they must have given birth to events of much historical interest, inasmuch as the Danes had become excedingly formidable from an alliance which they had formed with some of the Leinster princes. Under the command of Godfrey, a son of Sitric, both the Danes and Irish plundered and destroyed many districts of the kingdom, and failed not to rob the churches and monasteries wherever they went; whilst the monarch was unable to give them that effectual resistance which he so obviously desired.

Nor was the brave prince Domnall O'Nial, who succeeded him in 957, (although his right of succession was undoubted) more successful in commanding the obedience of the

refractory princes over whom he presided. He was the grandson of Niall Glundubh, by his son Murtagh ; and soon after his inauguration, Daniel, the son of the late monarch Congalach, leagued with the Danes and Lagenians for the purpose of supporting his own pretensions to the throne. In this, however, he was unsuccessful ; but still the reigning monarch learned thereby that his possession of the sovereignty was insecure and precarious. During twenty-four years he was harassed from every quarter of his dominions ; and such was the deplorable state to which the nation was reduced, that all public harmony became absolutely lost. The kings of Munster, Connaught, and Leinster, all in their turn, disturbed his administration ; and even the Clan Colman race sometimes took up arms against him. Feeling therefore at length tired out with the mere pageantry of royalty and disgusted with the world, he resigned his crown and retired to a monastery in Armagh, where he ended his days as a monk, and was succeeded by Malachy the Second, the son of Domnald, prince of Meath, and grandson to the monarch Donogh.*

During the reign of Congalach, and whilst Ceallachan the king of Munster was employed in pillaging the churches and monasteries, it is said, the Danes of Dublin embraced Christianity,† and sent their first bishop to Canterbury to receive the episcopal consecration. This event is worthy of attention, as in time it effected a change which all the flattery of princes and prelates had been hitherto

* O'Hal. Hist. Book xi. Chap. V.—Domnald O'Niall was the sixteenth and last monarch of the Tyrone line, and the forty-sixth of the Hy-Niall race.

† This year the Danes of Dublin received the Christian religion and were baptized." *An. of Innisfallen at* A. D. 948.

unable to accomplish. The schism, which commenced by the engraftment of a foreign branch of the church on the religion of the ancient Irish, was for many generations acknowledged by both the natives and the foreigners; and the spirit it engendered, in all probability, exists amongst the people, without understanding its real merits, to the present day.

It is possible that individuals of these foreigners may have received the doctrines of the gospel previously to this period. Some of them also may have become acquainted with its truths in their native land; for as early as the year 829, Christianity had been introduced into Sweden by Anscharius, the Bishop of Bremen; but the Danes of Dublin were the first of their nation that, in any large body in Ireland, made a profession of the Christian faith. This event was commemorated by their founding the abbey of St. Mary's *near* Dublin, the same year in which it took place. Their conversion, however, appears to have been only nominal, as it did not prevent them from carrying on that system of plunder, massacre, and general devastation, which, in the time of their predecessors, had prevailed in every part of the land. But two years after their supposed conversion they plundered and burned Slane, so that many persons assembled in its belfry, or *cloictheach*, perished in the flames.* In a short time after we find them exercising their wonted cruelties in Meath, and robbing the churches and monasteries of that country which they afterwards burned to the ground. In fine the same thirst for blood and plunder which influenced their pagan predecessors, was found in the breasts of those supposed converts to the religion of Christ.

* Ware's Ant., C. XXIV.

CHAPTER XI.

Brien Boroihme.

Whilst the Northmen were engaged in plundering and oppressing the people of Ireland, Brien Boroihme, or, as he is more commonly called, Boru, so celebrated in the annals of those times, was commencing that glorious and distinguished career which terminated only with his long and virtuous life. Mahon, his elder brother and predecessor in the government of North Munster, was a prince of great valour and intrepidity. During the time that he sat upon the throne of Thomond,* the Danes were in the habit of annoying and pillaging his dominions; and being in possession of almost all the strongholds in that province, they were enabled with the greater facility, by sudden and unexpected sallies, to effect their purposes of plunder and devastation. Finding himself unable to meet them in the field, Mahon, for some time, assisted by his brother, watched every opportunity that presented itself for the purpose of surprising and cutting off their different detached parties; and such was the success attendant upon this method of carrying on the war that his reputation and influence became every day more extensive.

* "The country of Thomond had a king of its own, and consisted of all the lands from Slighe Dala, known otherwise by the name of Bealach Mar, in Ossory, to Leim Congeulion, in the west of Carca Baisain." *Keating*, vol. ii., p. 202.

A. D. 968. Alarmed by the measures adopted by the king of Munster, the foreigners who had settled in Cork, Limerick, and Waterford, entered into a confederacy to crush, if possible, that power which had begun to prove so fatal to their enterprises; and for this purpose, three thousand chosen men were placed under the command of Muiris, one of their chieftains. While this body of men were on their march from Cashel to Limerick, the troops of Thomond hovered about them; and embraced every opportunity, in front and rear, of harassing them as they advanced. At length, at a noted pass named Sulchoid, perceiving an advantage favourable to their designs, they attacked the Northmen with such resistless fury and impetuosity, that the latter were driven into confusion; and, notwithstanding all the efforts of their leaders to re-animate them, they began to give way on every side. This trepidation was considerably increased by the slaughter that ensued. Immense numbers of the foreigners were cut to pieces, their principal leaders and officers were lost; and the remainder, having made their escape towards Limerick, were pursued so closely and eagerly by the Irish, that the latter entered the town together with themselves; and having put all to the sword who seemed disposed to make any resistance, they broke down the walls in several places, and set fire to all the gates of the city.*

Mahon's subsequent success against the Concacians, the Danes, and the Martini of Munster, after he had become king of the whole province, excited the envy of some of the inferior princes of the tribe of the Eoganachts; and

* Annals of Innisfallen, at A.D. 968.

particularly that of Maolmuadh, the son of Brien, who could not bear to see him so well secured in the possession of the provincial throne. He found that Mahon's superior intrepidity gave him a decided advantage over all his opponents; that he was daily increasing in popularity; and that when he himself had leagued with the common enemy, and endeavoured by this means to gratify his envious hostility against his king, he was disappointed in his expectations, as Mahon defeated their whole combined forces in two different battles.* Despairing therefore of success by open force, he had recourse to treachery; and having got the king into his power under the pretence of settling their differences amicably, he had him seized and carried off to the county of Cork, where he was basely murdered by a dynast of that country.†

A. D. 976. On the death of Mahon his brother Brien ascended the throne, and directed his attention immediately to the state of the province. His first care was to seek a just retribution for the murder of Mahon, and to avenge the treachery by which that crime had been accomplished. The place of Mahon's death was a lonesome region among mountains and forests near Macroom; and in this secluded and inaccessible wild Maolmuadh had entrenched himself, hoping by the assistance of the Danes, whom he had associated with his own followers, not only to retain his position if attacked by an enemy, but to signalize himself by the defeat of a rival who was the object of his hatred and detestation. But the king of Munster, who

* O'Hal, Vol. III., p. 233.

† Annals of Innisfallen at An. 976.

had long been accustomed to the species of warfare which was carried on in the mountain forests of the southern province, possessed too much skill and dexterity to be baffled in his designs upon this occasion; and having ascertained that a strong reinforcement under the command of O'Donovan, which was expected by Maolmuadh, had not yet come up to his assistance, he contrived to intercept them and gained a complete victory over them before they could form a junction with their perfidious ally. Then with the rapidity of an eagle pouncing on her prey and with purposes of inexorable vengeance existing in his breast, he turned upon the principal object of his resentment; defeated his party with incredible slaughter; and Maolmuadh himself fell by the hand of Brien's heroic son Morrogh, on the very spot on which had been committed that deed of treachery and blood which was the cause of the present engagement.

Brien, who was familiar with dangers and a stranger to fear, was not content with taking vengeance upon a petty toparch, or punishing the treachery of an obscure chieftain, but his next regard was to the interests of the province, over which he had been placed by the death of his brother. All the islands in the Shannon were at this time in the hands of the Danes; and the country on both sides of that river was constantly harassed by their sudden predatory excursions from these insular retreats. The beautiful little island of Scattery, then called Innis-Catha, rendered venerable in the eyes of the natives by a thousand recollections, had long been in their possession. It had been formerly a Bishop's see, said to have been founded in the fifth century by St. Senanus, and still presents some of the

remains of the tomb of that prelate. The ruins of the Cathedral, eleven churches, and several cells are still to be seen on the eastern extremity of the island, together with a round tower, one hundred and twenty feet high, which forms a very attractive object, as well as a useful landmark in the mouth of the Shannon.* This island Brien was resolved to rescue from the hands of the Danes, and therefore, having prepared a number of boats and larger vessels, at the head of a strong body of men chosen from the tribe of the Dalgais, he landed in the island, and defeated the possessors with prodigious slaughter. Taking advantage of the temporary prostration caused amongst his enemies by this successful enterprise, as well as of the lively feeling which it propagated throughout his own party, he seized and plundered all the islands which the foreigners possessed in the Shannon, laid waste their settlements, and made himself master of the spoils.

A. D. 979. Brien's success in military enterprises, before he had ascended the throne of Munster, had frequently excited the envy of some of the princes of that province; and it was probably owing to the same cause that Donald O'Faolan, prince of the Deasies, having leagued with the Danes of Waterford, invaded the territories of the king of Munster, and with all the rancorous malignity of a bitter foe, spread terror and desolation amongst the inhabitants. Brien, however, having received intelligence of these hostilities collected his troops together and came up with the enemy at a place called Fanmacurra; and after a vigorous but short resistance they were entirely routed.

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* Fitzgerald and McGregor's Hist. of Lim. Vol. II., p. 526.

Perceiving the bad success of his forces, the prince of the Deasies began to seek his safety by flight; but Brien's troops, not content with the victory they had gained, pursued his followers vigorously to the city of Waterford, and, entering the town together with the fugitives, they put them all to the sword; in which indiscriminate slaughter O'Faolan himself was numbered with the slain. The city was then sacked and plundered by the conquerors, and, after the booty had been sent away, it was set on fire in many places and consumed to ashes.

The fame of this exploit soon added to the celebrity which Brien had already acquired. He got hostages from all the chiefs and princes of Munster; and every part of the province submitted to his sway.* Having thus secured the internal peace and good order of his dominions his next care was to give vigour to the laws, and to improve the face and circumstances of the country. The churches, monasteries, bridges, and public roads were objects of immediate and sedulous attention. The lands, of which the natives had been dispossessed by the Danes, were restored to the heirs of their original proprietors; and such of the foreigners as did not choose to embrace the Christian religion were allowed twelve months to settle their affairs and to quit the kingdom.†

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* Annals of Innisfallen, at A.D. 977–979.

† "So exact was his police, that it stands on record that a beautiful virgin travelled from one extremity of the province to another, with a gold ring on the top of a white wand, without receiving the least injury or molestation! Probably Brien himself might have directed the experiment to be made."—*O'Hal. Hist. Vol. III.*, p. 241.

When Malachy had succeeded to the sovereign throne, his first object was to lead his troops against the Danes, who had invaded Meath with a powerful army; and having vanquished them in the field, he laid waste the district of Fingal, advanced to Dublin, and in conjunction with Donogh, the king of Ulster, he took that city by assault on the third day of the siege. Such was his success at this time, against the foreigners, that he obliged them to accept whatever terms he pleased to impose upon them; especially that of giving up all the captives in their power, and amongst the rest, Congal Claon, king of Leinster, an inconstant, seditious man, who returned the services rendered him on this occasion in the basest and most ungenerous manner. A proclamation was then issued in the monarch's name, for the deliverance of such of his subjects as were in servitude; and public thanksgiving to God was ordered throughout his dominions for the success of his arms.*

But, notwithstanding that the triumph of the Irish over their foreign enemies must have been highly gratifying to the monarch, his jealousy was excited by the growing power and influence of the king of Munster. In the first year of Malachy's reign, Brien marched into Ossory, made Mac-Gilla-Patrick, the chief of that territory, prisoner and compelled all the Ossorian chieftains to deliver him hostages for their future good behaviour. The following year, he reduced the Lagenians to the necessity of acknowledging his authority in the same manner, and the kings of that province were obliged to submit to him. He next marched

* See O'Conor's Dissert., p. 243.

to Cork and chastised the citizens for their rebellion, altered the magistrates of that city, and carried away hostages from them.

A.D. 982. The rapid success of this heroic and enterprising prince soon stimulated the envy and jealousy of the monarch into overt acts of violence and outrage, without any provocation that could justify such a line of conduct. He invaded Munster, plundered the hereditary property of Brien, cut down the ancient and venerable tree in the plain of Adair, under the spreading branches of which the Dalcassian princes had always been inaugurated, and returned to Tara loaded with the spoils of the Momonians.

These outrages would have been sufficient of themselves to rouse the resentment of the king of Munster; but the monarch seemed not to have been content with what he had already done, for in the following year he ravaged Leinster which was then under the immediate protection of the southern dynast. Incensed by these provocations, Brien made every preparation for invading Meath and Connaught. He marched against Malachy with a powerful army, and forced him to agree to a treaty, by which it was stipulated that the monarch should make restitution for the outrages committed in the late invasion of Munster; that Brien should be recognized as king of Leath Mogha, or the southern half of Ireland; that the king of Leinster and the Danes of Dublin should be subject to him; and that Malachy should govern Leith Cuin, or the northern half of the kingdom.*

Between these two princes, whose quarrel was heredi-

* Annals of Innisfallen, at A.D. 981–983.

tary, no treaty could give any permanent and lasting peace; and they carried on various wars with each other at different times, in which Brien had generally the advantage of the monarch. Malachy was by no means satisfied that the power of this provincial potentate had risen to so great a height, but he found himself unable to contend with a prince so wise in council and so able in the field. He gained a victory, however, over Brien in 994; but the latter retaliated on him in the subsequent year by a complete and decisive overthrow. At length a peace was concluded between them, and Malachy was again obliged to acknowledge Brien's title to the sovereignty of the southern half of the kingdom. The two kings then united and conjointly attacked the Northmen in several places, from whom they obtained hostages for their future peaceable demeanour. They routed the Danes of Dublin with incredible slaughter, and put several of their chieftains of the first quality and distinction to the sword.* But, notwithstanding their success was so great, the foreigners were not completely subdued; for in the following year they were found assisting Maolmurry in compelling Donogh, the king of Leinster, to resign his crown to him. They also plundered Kildare the same year; but Brien, having marched to Dublin, chastised them for their insolence; burned many of their houses; banished their king Sitric; and, having remained in the city for a week, carried off much booty which he took from the marauders.†

Meanwhile the monarch began to sink into a spirit of

* See Annals, *ut supra* at A.D. 984–998.

† Ware Ant., 6. 24.

indolence and apathy, which formed a striking contrast with the vigour and energy of his southern rival, as well as with his own conduct during the first five years of his administration. His time was no longer employed in recruiting the number of his followers in arms, re-animating their courage, fostering their spirit of bravery, and preparing for a speedy and determined advance on the enemy. It is true that, after a temporary reconciliation with Brien, he sometimes exhibited a fitful energy in opposition to the common enemy of his people; but this spirit soon died away, and whilst he gave way to his own indolent habits, he left Brien to guard the safety of the country from the unceasing inroads of its vigilant foes.

The contrast which the magnanimity, justice, and patriotism of Brien Boru formed with the character and conduct of such a monarch, could not fail to make a powerful impression upon the minds of all who had the interests of their country at heart. Continually in arms against the foreigners and their Irish associates, Brien was generally victorious; and he not only obliged them to acknowledge his authority in his own dominions, but he assisted the Conacians against them, so that four thousand Danes are said to have fallen in the battle of Succa alone.* With such a king as this at the head of the nation the princes and chieftains in the different provinces began to hope that the whole people would soon experience those blessings of peace and subordination which were then confined to the limits of Leath-Mogha. They saw the spirit of infatuation that had seized on their

* O'Hal., Vol. III., p. 246.

passive and temporising monarch, and, being convinced of the desperate posture of their affairs under such a sovereign, it was agreed in a meeting of the different states of Connaught, and Munster, to request Brien to assume the monarchy; and a resolution was entered into to support him to the utmost, should he only consent to comply with their desires. Deputies were, in consequence of this determination, sent to inform Malachy, that, as he neither exerted himself to fulfil the duties of a monarch, nor to protect his people from oppression and injury, it was the desire of the States that he should resign his crown to one who was more worthy and better qualified to wear it for the good of the country.

Malachy, who had the year before committed some depredations in Leinster, and had thereby provoked his more powerful rival, heard this proposal with a mixture of indignation and anxiety; but, concealing the latter, he declared his intention of maintaining his right against any prince who should attempt to deprive him of his crown and dignity. His conduct, however, had been such as determined Brien with regard to the course which he was now to pursue. At the head of a considerable force, composed of Connacians and Danes, as well as the troops of his own province, he marched towards Tara, and having come up with the main body of his antagonist's army, the latter found it adviseable not to depend upon the issue of a battle, but yielded at once to the terms he proposed, and promised him hostages for the punctual fulfilment of all his engagements.

Malachy, it is obvious, only sought upon this occasion an immediate respite from the dangers which threatened him; and had no intention of proving faithful, in future,

to the stipulated agreement. He endeavoured immediately on Brien's departure to engage the princes of Connaught and Ulster in his favour. He used every argument to induce Hugh O'Niall, at that time the most powerful chieftain in the north, to espouse his cause; and even the Abbot of Bangor remonstrated with the former on behalf of the monarch: but O'Niall's answer was such as convinced Malachy that it was in vain for him to struggle in opposition to the tide of popular feeling which had set in so strongly against him. That chieftain observed, "that when the crown of Tara was possessed by his ancestors of the house of Tyrone, they bravely defended it against all claimants; that Brien was a prince, whose virtues, bravery, and patriotism, merited the applause of all good men; and that he could not think of unsheathing his sword against the gallant tribe of the Dalgais, whose military prowess he had so long admired.

A. D. 1001. In the meantime Brien, who was fully apprised of the monarch's movements, as well as of the feelings of the people that were so strong in his own favour, marched with an army again into Meath, and appearing in the plains of Tara, compelled Malachy, not only to submit and give him hostages, but, in the presence of the princes and chiefs of the land, to make a formal surrender of the crown and regalia of Ireland to him, and to content himself with his own principality of Meath.* Thus did Brien become

* Annals of Innisfallen, at A. D. 1000, 1001. O'Connor gives credit to Malachy for resigning the crown voluntarily to Brien; but every circumstance connected with the whole transaction proves the reverse. *See O'Con. Dissert., pp.* 244, 245.

king of all Ireland, by an extraordinary revolution, without any bloodshed or even the least civil commotion; and the following year he proceeded to Athlone and received the submission of the kings and princes of Connaught and Ulster, who acquiesced in the deposition of their former monarch, whatever might have been their private feelings concerning it.

This revolution, so unprecedented in all its circumstances, at least in Ireland, has given rise to various conflicting opinions. Brien's accession to the throne has been called an usurpation, by some; and with the help of supposed motives, the whole of his conduct has been represented as the result of principles of the most selfish and dishonourable description; whilst by others his assumption of the sovereignty has been lauded as the only means of saving the country from that ruin to which it appeared to be rapidly approaching.

It must be granted that the Heremonian family had, for several ages previously, limited the right of succession to themselves; but it is equally certain that the Irish monarchy had been always elective; and that from the beginning no regard had been paid at any time to hereditary right. Even the Heremonians themselves had invariably pleaded this when any claim was made by the Heberian branch upon account of its seniority. It may also be remarked, that there is no proof that the motion for deposing the reigning monarch came from the king of Leath-Mogha, or that the latter proposed himself as the person upon whom the imperial diadem was to be conferred. He was then in the seventy-sixth year of his age, and it is not likely that a crown of thorns, as that of Ireland was

at the time, could have many attractions for a man whose attention ought to have been fixed rather upon one that was incorruptible. The inference is therefore obvious, that the provincial dynasts, and inferior toparchs, reflecting on the melancholy and distressed condition of the nation through the luxury and supineness of a nominal sovereign, who sought his own happiness in a life of contemptible oscitancy, without any regard for the welfare of his people, first formed the resolution to depose him; and for the same reason this determination was seconded by the united voice of the people. Resolved therefore to accomplish this design, at all events, their application was made to Brien to take the reins of government into his hands; and they hoped by this means to obtain the same blessings for the whole nation which that incomparable prince had procured for his own subjects in the south of Ireland. Had the latter led an indolent and inglorious life of pleasure, while the common enemy was depopulating and laying waste his country, he would never have been called to assume the throne of monarchy; and had Malachy continued the same active zeal which characterized the earlier part of his administration, he would never have been called upon to relinquish his crown and dignity to one whose numerous virtues pointed him out as worthy of them. The talented Editor of "Lives of Illustrious and distinguished Irishmen," who has taken an unfavourable view of Brien's character,* at least in this transaction, should have recollected, that had Malachy been that brave and vigilant prince which his advocates assert him to have been, it would

* See Wills' Lives. p. 204.

have been impossible that when his rival marched to Tara at the head of a strong force, there should be "neither help for the monarch in his weakness nor pity in his misfortunes." The Irish nation was never so devoid of generosity towards a deserving object, nor is there any thing in the previous history of the king of Leath Mogha that would justify the inference that he had ever suffered his ambition to triumph over his love of strict justice and the welfare of his subjects. Brien's conduct, in whatever light we view it, will appear to be great, noble, and patriotic; and when his subsequent career is duly considered, it will be found that he was influenced solely by a love of his country in the part which he took upon this occasion.

Notwithstanding Brien's accession was followed by a general acknowledgment of his authority throughout the island, there were some petty princes in different places, that opposed themselves to the general voice and refused to acknowledge him as their lawful sovereign. The energy of his firm and capacious mind, however, as well as the promptitude with which he was accustomed to act, gave them no time to form themselves into confederacies, or to acquire any strength in that opposition which they were disposed to give to his government. He despatched his son Morrogh, with a body of the provincial troops of Munster and Leinster, against some of the malcontents; and he marched himself at the head of a considerable force against others, whom he soon reduced to obedience. In his progress, on one of these occasions,* he visited Armagh, where Marinus, the successor of St. Patrick, at the head of his clergy,

* Annals of Innisfallen, at A. 1004.

acknowledged his authority: and, it is said, that the monarch having received the holy communion at the hands of that prelate, left as an offering on the great altar of the cathedral, a golden collar, weighing twenty ounces.

Having established himself in the quiet possession of the throne, Brien's first care was to correct those disorders which were then so generally prevalent throughout the kingdom. The imbecility of several of his immediate predecessors had consigned the strength of the monarchy to a temporary annihilation; and by the preposterous stupidity of some of them, as well as by the want of firmness and energy in others, the legislative power had been completely unhinged, and the civil economy quite disconcerted. The throne of Tara had been frequently occupied by monarchs that may be seen to pass and repass in unsubstantial images along the gallery of history without becoming, as they ought to have done, the prime actors in those scenes either of warfare or politics which involved so many consequences that were most momentous to the nation. Disorders therefore of a very disastrous nature were the result of this state of things, and required a prudent and vigorous policy in order that they might be so rectified as to restore and perpetuate the public good. That he might therefore accomplish his purpose with the greater facility, Brien endeavoured to keep the different princes and chieftains in temper, by confirming them in all their ancient privileges and prerogatives, and by bestowing upon each of them such presents and honours as were suitable to their rank and dignity. He next summoned the clergy of every order, and having restored them to their former functions, he established on their old foundations those

temporalities which had been alienated to other purposes by the Danes. He recalled the exiled members of collegiate societies and restored them to their former employments and revenues. He repaired those literary edifices which had been laid in ruins by the Danes, and erected others in several places throughout the island, where it appeared that such establishments were requisite. In these schools were taught, in addition to theology, the liberal sciences, together with the various branches of philosophy and polite literature. He established public libraries for accommodation of such poor students as were unable to provide books for themselves, and supported in their literary pusuits young men of genius and talent, whose limited means were insufficient for that purpose. The most eminent professors were procured for his academies: and having thus applied a remedy to the decayed state of learning in his dominions, he had the satisfaction of witnessing the salutary effect of the measures he had adopted.

In the reign of this monarch, it is said, that the custom of giving certain surnames to families of distinction began to be generally prevalent in Ireland. This usage had been practised at a very early period in some particular cases but it was chiefly confined to a very few families or to individuals who received *a soubriqaet* from some personal peculiarity. In this reign, however, it came into general use, and every chief began to be called after some distinguished ancestor, whose particular virtues were calculated to remind him of his origin. Accordingly descendants of the present monarch assumed from the name of O'Brien's.* The issue

* These titles were so highly esteemed in Ireland, that when it was known to a certainty, in the reign of Henry the Eighth,

of his brother Mahon were called MacMahon. The O'Neils were so called from Niall the great; and in the same manner all the other families received their surnames. The adjunct of O', or Mac, which signified the son or descendant of him whose name was given to the family, was prefixed to the *cognomen;* and the chief of each family was distinguished from its branches by preserving the surname only, whilst to all the rest the Christian name was added.

The royal seat of Kincora, about a mile from Killaloe, which had been so celebrated when Brien governed the province of Munster, he ordered to be taken down, and erected a more splendid one at a place some distance from it, which is still known by the name of Bal-Boroihme.

As the Danes were a commercial people, and consequently an advantage to the country, when disposed to live peaceably, such of them as were settled in the principal seaports were suffered to remain unmolested, upon condition of giving security for their allegiance and a large annual tribute for the monarch's protection. All the rest of the foreigners were expelled from the island; and, having witnessed the advantages these strangers had derived from their garrisons, Brien made use of the latter for his own purposes, and erected other fortifications wherever he judged them necessary. And thus, by the wisdom, the justice, and the pious care of this monarch, Ireland was restored to a state of peace,

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that O'Brien had rejected his for the more degrading one of Earl of Thomond, the chiefs of his own blood set fire to his noble mansion at Cluanroad, near Ennis, and would have consumed him in the flames, but for the timely interposition of MacClanchy a chief justice of North Munster." *O'Halloran, Vol. III.*, p. 254.

tranquility, and happiness to which she had hitherto been a complete stranger.*

A.D. 1013. But whilst the monarch was thus laying plans for the welfare and prosperity of his people, a storm was gathering, which, like the thunder awfully grumbling in the distant clouds, soon burst forth with incredible fury and menaced with destruction the best interests of the country. Maolmurry, the king of Leinster, who had usurped the throne of that province in 999, having received some insult, either real or supposed, at the court of the monarch, marched into Meath at the head of a powerful army of Lagenians and Danes, and laid waste the country, pillaging the inhabitants and carrying off an immense booty. Incensed by this unwarrantable outrage, Malachy, who still retained the title of king of Meath, in retaliation, set fire to the neighbouring district of Fingal, but having been met by Maolmurry, accompanied by Sitric, king of Dublin, he was defeated with considerable loss. Finding himself unable, with his own forces, to resist the aggressions of his enemies, Malachy was obliged to apply to Brein for assistance against the Danes and Lagenians. The monarch, sensible of the justice of his complaint, resolved to give him the assistance he required; and, having set out with his forces, he laid waste Ossory on his way, and encamped at Kilmainham, near Dublin, where he remained for almost four months without being able to bring either the Danes

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"* Equally vigilant to control disaffection and turbulence, and to conciliate opinion—equally politic to select the means, and powerful to enforce them—his reign was the most prosperous for Ireland that her annals, with any seeming truth, record."—*Wills' Lives*, see p. 205.

or Lagenians to battle. In the meantime a large body of Northmen entered the harbour of Cork, and, having surprised the city, burned it to the ground, but before they could regain their ships, the greater part of them fell in the enterprise, together with the most valiant and distinguished of their leaders.

A.D. 1014. The approach of winter having rendered it necessary for the monarch and his forces to return to Munster, Maolmurry and his partisans, taking advantage of his absence, used their utmost exertions to collect troops and auxiliaries from every quarter, for the purpose of renewing the war with more energy than ever. A great number, therefore, of adventurers poured into the different parts in Leinster, from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Normandy, Britain, the Orkneys, and every other northern settlement. Maolmurry, in the meantime, was indefatigable, not only in raising new levies, but in using every means in his power to detach several of the native princes and chieftains from the interests of their country. Never was there a more energetic movement amongst the enemies of Ireland than on this occasion; and never was there a firmer determination on the part of the Irish to resist them with vigour and intrepidity.

As an indication of his wish that none of his family or name should survive the liberties of his country, the Irish monarch was attended by his five sons, his grandson, fifteen of his nephews, and the whole tribe of the Dalgais, with all the chiefs of North Munster. The southern Momonians were equally conspicuous in the cause of liberty, not one prince absenting himself from the standard of his sovereign. North Britain also sent forth her hardy chiefs,

who, with their intrepid followers, swelled the ranks of the Irish army and resolved to make common cause against such enemies of the lives and liberties of mankind.

As Brien passed through Meath, he was joined by Malachy and the forces of that principality. But revenge, like some poisonous plant replete with baneful juices, still rankled in the heart of the king of Meath. He had not forgotten that Brien had deprived him of the monarchy; and perceiving that he had now an opportunity of gratifying his revenge, which he preferred to the interests of his country, he resolved to act the part of a traitor as soon as the conflict should have commenced. In pursuance of this resolution, it is said, he gave information to the king of Leinster of some of the monarch's plans and proceedings, and promised to desert with his followers on the day of battle. This inteliigence determined the enemy to attack Brien before his son Donogh, whom he had sent to ravage Leinster, should come up to his assistance. The Danes and Lagenians formed themselves into three divisions; which being perceived by the monarch, he regulated the disposition of his own troops accordingly. The first division of the enemy consisted of the Danes of Dublin under Dolat and Conmaol, and of one thousand Northmen, encased in coats of mail, commanded by two Norwegian princes, Carolus and Anrud. The second was composed of the flower of Leinster, about nine thousand in number, headed by Maolmurry, their king, together with a large number of Danes. The third division was composed partly of Northmen and partly of Britons, under the command of Lodar, Earl of the Orkneys and Bruadair, admiral of the fleet that had brought the auxiliaries to Ireland. This

arrangement, it was supposed, would excite a spirit of emulation amongst the troops, by placing them under their respective leaders.

The monarch was well aware of the formidable force that he had now to encounter; but dividing his army likewise into three divisions, he was resolved to depend upon "the God of battles" for the issue of this important contest. His first division was under the command of his son Morrogh, and Sitric, prince of Ulster; and was composed of his household troops, filled up with the prime nobility of Munster. Malachy, with the forces of Meath, was also in this division. The troops of Desmond and South Munster, under their different chiefs, with those of the Deasies, formed the central division, and were commanded by Cian and Donald, two princes of the Eugenian line. In the division composing the left wing, the Conacians were placed under Teige O'Connor as chief commander; but as it did not form a line so extensive as that of their antagonists, several detachments were added to it, from different parts of Tipperary, Limerick, Clare, and other places, commanded by their respective chieftains.*

The object of the foreigners, who might still be considered in their pagan state, was to crush for ever the power of the Irish, and to become the absolute possessors of the whole kingdom. Of this the monarch being convinced, he perceived, when too late, his own imprudence in suffering them to possess the principal seaports in his dominions when he could have driven them entirely out of the coun-

* Annals of Innisfallen, at A.D. 1014.

try: and he was now resolved to strike that blow which would render them unable to disturb the peace of his subjects any more. Had the treacherous Irish allies of the Danes possessed the same spirit of patriotism, this design could have been easily accomplished; but their unnatural confederacy with these foreigners rendered the matter, in the present instance, doubtful in the extreme.

The insular levies under the command of Bruadair, who had arrived in Dublin on Palm Sunday, insisted that the battle should be fought on good Friday, to which they knew that the Irish monarch would have a strong, religious objection. It is said that Bruadair had been informed by a pagan oracle, that should the battle be fought on Friday, the victory would be certain to the Danes;* and it is probable that this was a strong inducement to urge them to the contest upon that day. Compelled therefore to take the field, even on Good Friday, Brien rode through the ranks with a crucifix† in one hand, and his drawn sword in the other; and exhorted his followers, as he passed along, to do their duty as soldiers and Christians in the cause of their religion and their country. He reminded them of what their ancestors had suffered from these foreigners, and assured them that the men they were now about to engage in battle were ready to renew the same scenes of devastation and cruelty: "and,

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* Johnstone's Ant. Celto-Scand. Lanigan Chap. XXIII. Note 71.

† Since the days of Constantine this was the symbol chosen by a Christian army in all their wars against pagans: whether it was appropriate or not every reader must form an opinion for himself.

by way of anticipation," said he, "they have fixed on the very day on which Christ was crucified, to destroy the country of his greatest votaries; but that God, for whose cause you are to fight this day, will be present with you, and deliver his enemies into your hands."

The two armies met on the plains of Clontarf in all the pomp of military array: whilst swords, battle axes, and other instruments of human destruction, were exhibited by the combatants in formidable magnificence. After haranguing his troops, the monarch was proceeding to lead them forward, but his great age induced the chiefs of the army, with one consent, to request that he would retire from the field, and leave the chief command to his gallant son Morrogh. As soon as the conflict had commenced, Malachy with his followers, retired suddenly from the scene of action and remained mere spectators, while the rest of their countrymen were exposed to a far superior number of enemies. This defection, however, though treacherous and ungrateful, was far from dismaying the undaunted forces of the Irish monarch. Like the mountains that are not to be shaken by conflicting elements, their intrepidity was not diminished by this exhibition of meanness and deceit. Though Malachy's secession rendered the division in which he had been placed far inferior in numbers to that of the enemy with which they were to engage, Morrogh, with great presence of mind, cried out to his brave Dalcassians "that this was the time to distinguish themselves, as they alone would have the unrivalled glory of cutting off that formidable body of the enemy."

Never was there greater intrepidity, perseverance, or

skill displayed in any battle than in that of Clontarf. The plains upon which this engagement took place admitted of no ambuscades or other stratagems; and the belligerents on both sides fought man to man with a degree of courage and dexterity almost unparalleled in the history of any country. From sunrise till the evening nothing was heard but the din of arms, the groans of the dying, and all the heady tumult of ancient warfare. Morrogh and his gallant associates flew from place to place, and left the sanguinary traces of their courage and intrepidity wherever they came. No quarters were given; nor were they expected on either side of the field. The tide of battle seemed to flow sometimes towards the Danish and sometimes towards the Irish extremity of the plains, as the one or the other party prevailed. Such was the valour displayed on both sides, that the issue of the day remained doubtful until near four o'clock in the afternoon; when the Irish, collecting all their energies and roused into resistless fury, made a general attack with such impetuosity upon the enemy, that the latter, whose principal leaders had already fallen, began to give way on every side. Their loss upon this occasion has been variously estimated; but certain it is, it must have been very considerable. Those men that wore coats of mail, and that were considered the flower of the Northmen, are said to have been completely cut to pieces, together with their commanders, Carolus and Anrud, as well as Dolat, and Conmaol who commanded the Danes of Dublin. Amongst the slain, were also the traitorous Maolmurry, the Scandinavian admiral Bruadair, together with an incredible number of native and foreign chieftains. But notwithstanding the victory was decisive in favour of the Irish, it was dearly

purchased by the loss they sustained during the course of the day. Besides a great number of Irish troops, the monarch himself, his son Morrogh, and his grandson Turlogh, together with several princes of Munster and Connaught, were numbered with the slain. It is said that Morrogh was treacherously stabbed by Anrud, one of the Danish commanders, who was lying on the ground, and in the act of being relieved by him. Amongst the various and contradictory accounts that are given of his father's death, perhaps the best is that which states, that Bruadair, who had fled into a wood with a party of his followers, happening to see the king in a retired spot attended by only a few men, rushed upon him unawares and slew him on the spot.

The following account of the monarch's death, extracted from an ancient Irish manuscript, and translated by Mr. O'Donovan, whether it be strictly correct in its details or not, cannot fail to interest the reader :

"The confusion became general through the Danish army, and they fled on every side. Laidin, the servant of Bryan, observing the confusion, feared that the imperial army was defeated, he hastily entered the tent of Bryan, who was on his knees before a crucifix, and requested that he would immediately take a horse and flee. "No," says Bryan, "it was to conquer or die I came here ; but do you and my other attendants take my horses to Armagh, and communicate my will to the successor of St. Patrick : that I bequeath my soul to God, my body to Armagh, and my blessing to my son Donogh. Give two hundred cows to Armagh along with my body ; and go directly to Swords of Columkille, and order them to come for my

body to-morrow and conduct it to Duleek of St. Kiaran, and let them convey it to Lowth; whither let Maelmurry, the son of Eochy Comharb, of St. Patrick, come with the family of Armagh, and convey it to their cathedral." "People are coming towards us," says the servant. "What sort of people are they?" says Bryan. "Green, naked people," says the servant. "They are the Danes in armour," says Bryan; and he rose from his pillow, seized his sword, and stood to await the approach of Broder and some of his followers: and he saw no part of him without armour, except his eyes and his feet. Bryan raised his hand, and gave him a blow, with which he cut off his left leg from the knee, and the right from the ancle; but Broder's axe met the head of Bryan and fractured it. Bryan, however, with all the fury of a dying warrior beheaded Broder, and killed a second Dane by whom he was attacked, and then gave up the ghost."

At the battle of Clontarf, which was of such essential moment to the Irish nation, this great and magnanimous monarch died, in the eighty-eighth year of his age and the thirteenth of his monarchy. Great men, who have rendered signal services to their country, have sometimes left behind them, in the characters they have created, a sort of shadowy army which fights for their reputation, even if there is scarcely a shred of it remaining; but this was not the case with Brien, whose character it is very difficult to draw without seeming to be chargeable with giving it too high a colouring.

In the early part of his life, which was spent in the tents of strife and the territories of disorder, his inclination led him to engage frequently in military exploits and the

exercises of the field; but this predilection did not tend to diminish his love of the arts and sciences. His taste for literary pursuits increased with his years; and the endowments of his mind were almost incredible when the disadvantages under which he constantly laboured are duly considered. To the Church he was not only a bountiful benefactor, but by his own pious and upright example, amidst all the inconvenience and turmoil of a military life, he endeavoured to diffuse a spirit of piety and religion throughout every grade in society. Urbane in his manners, condescending in his deportment, and at all times easy of access, he exhibited no inflexibility of character in any thing except in the administration of justice. To the clergy he was a powerful protector and patron, and gave them every encouragement in the discharge of the sacred duties of their office. As illustrious examples are the most winning incitements to virtue, he effected, by his countenance and support of men of piety and letters, an extensive change in the manners and dispositions of his people. Dignified in his concessions, as well as in every act of regal authority, he avoided the charge of meanness on the one hand, and of severity on the other. The pleasantry of his conversation in the hours of leisure and social enjoyment, was equal to the courage and greatness of his mind in the time of danger and alarm.

Nor were his bodily endowments inferior to those of his great and enlightened soul, as at the age of fourscore years he was able to undergo the rudest fatigues of war, and to set an example to his troops of vigilance and intrepidity. In short as a soldier, a statesman, a legislator, a Christian, and a scholar, he had few equals and, perhaps, no superiors among the princes of his day. England has been justly

proud of her Alfred, and Rome of some of her Cæsars, but in true magnanimity of character, inflexible love of justice, chastened by experience, and an intimate knowledge of mankind, a heroism almost romantic, which was ever displayed in a righteous cause, and a profound veneration for that Being by whom kings reign and princes decree justice, be made the standard by which a monarch is to be judged, the character of Brien Boru stands on an elevation far above the level of any of his contemporaries. Other princes may have adopted various methods of bribing the vote of fame, or of purchasing a little posthumous renown, but an uninterrupted series of splendid and glorious actions is the legible inscription of this monarch, and his ensuring, by his wise administration, the best interests of his country is the plate that still continues to exhibit it to posterity.

According to the directions of the dying monarch the clergy of Swords, the day after the battle, took possession of his body, for the purpose of forwarding it to Armagh. Having brought it to their abbey, it was removed the next morning to Duleek, and thence by the people of that place to Louth, where it was met by the Bishop and clergy of Armagh, who conveyed it to their own cathedral. The body of Morrogh and the head of Conaing his cousin were also carried with the remains of the king, that they might be interred in the same place. The funeral obsequies were celebrated with great pomp and magnificence; and then the body was deposited in a stone coffin at the north side of the cathedral, while that of Morrogh and the head of Conaing were placed at the south side. The other chieftains who fell at the battle of Clontarf were interred at the monastery of Kilmainham.

CHAPTER XII.

Events Subsequent to the Death of Brien Boru.

As soon as the battle of Clontarf was concluded, Teige, one of the sons of Brien Boru, withdrew with the remnant of the Irish army to the camp at Kilmainham, and was joined at that place on the following day by his brother Donogh. But scarcely had the Momonians, under their respective leaders, proceeded about twenty miles on their march towards their own country, before a dispute arose between the Eugenian and Dalcassian princes about their respective claims upon the provincial throne of Munster.

Desirous of regaining the sovereignty of their province, the Eugenians, finding that the Dalgais had suffered so much in the battle, and that their own force was now greatly superior, thought this a proper opportunity to revive their pretensions to the crown of Munster; and accordingly Cian, the son of Maolmuadh, sent a formal embassay on the second morning of their march, to the sons of Brien, informing them of his intention; and not only requesting of them the same support and assistance which he had afforded to their father, but demanding submission from them as their chief, and hostages for their future good behaviour. He pleaded the disposal of the crown, according to the will of their great ancestor, Olioll Olum, by alternate succession; but received a spirited and resolute answer from the two princes, refusing to acknowledge his claim; and, as Cian found himself, notwithstanding his supposed advantage,

unable to support his pretensions, the former were suffered to march off quietly with the remnant of their intrepid and patriotic band.

The contrast which the situation of these two princes now formed with that in which they had stood but a few days before, depicts most powerfully the fluctuating uncertainty to which all terrestrial things are subject. Their own public services, as well as those of their illustrious father, were almost instantly forgotten; and the men who had heretofore been received with the plaudits of an admiring multitude, and whose frown was dreaded by the most powerful chieftains, were doomed to suffer, even on their march from the plains of Clontarf, the most mortifying trials, before they could reach the mansion of their ancestors. As soon as they approached the borders of Ossory, Fitzpatrick, the chief of that district, moved by hereditary hostility towards the sons of Brien, with the most consummate insolence and presumption, sent a messenger to them requiring hostages for the good behaviour of their troops as they marched through his territories. Had they ever been his equals this might have been pardonable; or had they been reduced to their present distressed situation by plundering and laying waste their country like so many other princes of Ireland it might have been justifiable, but under the existing circumstances it was neither the one nor the other. In the meantime, Fitzpatrick had not only assembled his own followers, but had collected a strong body of auxiliaries from Leinster; and was resolved to enforce his demand, should the two princes refuse to comply with the terms he proposed.

Incensed with rage and indignation at the insolence of

this message, the sons of Brien expressed their astonishment at the presumption of the prince of Ossory, to the herald; and said, that, notwithstanding their power was now greatly diminished by their recent sufferings in the cause of their country, they were still able with the remnant of their troops, to punish a dastardly chief like him, who meanly availed himself of the distressed position in which they were placed.

Apprehensive of the consequences of a conflict, and foreseeing that the destruction of this band of patriots was inevitable, should a battle then ensue, the herald ventured to remonstrate with the princes, and entreated them not to send an answer to his master so ill adapted to their present situation: but the intrepid Donogh, unaccustomed to such language even from princes, was so enraged with the presumption of the herald that he declared, if the law of nations had not secured his person, he would order his tongue to be cut out for his insolence, and commanded him to repair immediately to his master with the answer he had received.* "At what period of time," said he, "did any one of my ancestors do homage, or deliver hostages to an Ossorian? That the posterity of Eogan should sometimes make such demands, is not surprising, being the issue of the eldest son of our great ancestor; but there never has been an instance, except the present, in which the chief of Ossory dared to demand hostages from the posterity of Olioll Olum."

But the opposition of Fitzpatrick, which proceeded solely from feelings of personal resentment, was paralyzed

* Warner, Vol. II. p. 218.

by the subsequent conduct of his own followers. Moved either by fear or sympathy, they absolutely refused to encounter the forces of North Munster in their present situation; and the sons of Brien were suffered to proceed on their march homewards without any further molestation. With the usual fatuity, however, attendant upon the conduct of Irish chieftains towards each other, these two princes quarrelled before the end of this memorable year, a battle was fought between their respective followers, and in the issue of the contest, Teige was victorious.*

Meanwhile the sovereign throne having been left vacant, by the death of Brien Boru, Malachy, the king of Meath, notwithstanding the proofs he had given of his unfitness for that dignity, had the address to get himself reinstated in the monarchy.† About thirteen years before this event, he had procured his own deposition, by his indolence and inattention to the protection of his people: and, in no instance, during that period, had he proved himself worthy of public confidence. Forgetful of the allegiance which he had professed to the sovereign who succeeded him, as well as of the duty which he owed to his country, he had basely and treacherously deserted his station at the battle of Clontarf, and hazarded the public ruin for the gratification of his own private jealousy and revenge. It is true he conducted himself quietly, without making any attempt to disturb the public peace, during the period of his deposition; but this was owing rather to the valour, good con-

* Annals of Innisfallen, at A. D. 1014.

† Malachy's title, notwithstanding his assumption of the monarchy, was never acknowledged by the O'Brien's or by the people of Munster.—*Lanigan, Chap. XXIII.*

duct, and great popularity of the reigning monarch, than to any meritorious disposition on his part. Such a character, therefore, could not have been an object of national esteem; and had not the circumstances of the country been such as to prevent the states from pursuing their usual course, he would not have laid hold on a crown so easily which he had forfeited by his base and unworthy conduct. Perceiving, however, no formidable rival in his way, and being at the head of a body of troops that had suffered nothing in the previous engagement, he succeeded in having himself proclaimed monarch by his own immediate partisans.

A. D. 1015. Whatever opinion may be formed of Malachy's patriotism or principle, notwithstanding his defection on the plains of Clontarf, he appears to have been by no means friendly to those foreigners who had been so long the oppressors of his countrymen. As soon therefore as he found himself once more seated upon the throne in security, he led an army, in conjunction with his Northern ally, Hugh O'Neill, against such of the Danes of Dublin as had survived the late battle; plundered and burned almost the whole city; and by this means endeavoured to remove at least part of that odium which still rested on his character. But in the following year these foreigners, under the command of Sitric their king, took ample vengeance for this visitation, by plundering and destroying the adjacent country, and putting all the inhabitants to the sword, without any regard to age, sex, or condition.*

The frequent recurrence in the Irish annals of such

* Annals of Innisfallen, at A. D. 1015, 1016.

entries as record the total extirpation of the Danes, and their immediate appearance again in the work of desolation, would naturally induce the reader to distrust the veracity of the annalist, were he not to make a due allowance for the hyperbolical mode of expression which the Irish chroniclers generally employed upon such occasions.* The "total extirpation" of the foreigners signifies no more in these records than the signal overthrow; because their forces were never so completely ruined as to prevent their rallying again, and resuming their wonted course of plunder and destruction.

A. D. 1018. The inhabitants of Leinster, who had formerly joined in a confederacy against the liberties of their country, were soon convinced that little confidence could be reposed in the friendship of the ungrateful and irreclaimable traitors that the Danes had always proved themselves to be. Besides the usual depredations that they were accustomed to commit in those parts of the province which lay contiguous to Dublin, it is said that Sitric, their king, upon some dispute, had the eyes of Bran, the son of Maolmurry, put out;† and thus visited upon that prince the treachery and baseness of which his father had been guilty. The monarch also invaded the Lagenians,

* "A figure of the Irish language, which, when translated, has the appearance of violent misrepresentation, but is really no more than the species of hyperbole, of which the modern application of the word 'kilt' is an example. The 'total extirpation" is used precisely in the same sense, and is to be understood as no more or less than 'a good beating.' *Wills' Lives*, &c., p. 196.

† Ware's Ant., Cap. XXIV.

and chastised them for their refusal to submit to his authority. The same line of conduct he pursued towards some of the petty princes of Ulster, and by the terror of his arms he caused himself to be feared, if not respected, throughout all the provinces, except that of Munster.

A. D. 1022. Having sacrificed much that he might regain the monarchy, Malachy, when it was too late, began to blame himself for the course which he had hitherto pursued. Being now far advanced in years, and feeling the infirmities of old age coming rapidly upon him, he became sensible of his inability to discharge the duties connected with the important station which he now filled. The factions and intestine broils which continued to prevail were too much for his declining years. He therefore commenced the dedication of his remaining days to works of piety and public utility. He rebuilt and repaired several churches and monasteries which had fallen into decay: and made provision, in the different seminaries of learning throughout the kingdom, for the maintenance and education of three hundred poor students. After a second reign of eight years, he departed this life, in the seventy-second year of his age, without being much regretted—except by his own immediate followers.

With Malachy the Second ended the government of the Hy-Niall race;* and the confusion which ensued, hastened the dissolution of the monarchy itself. For, notwithstanding some of the provincial kings assumed the supreme title, and exercised the power connected with it amongst their respective parties, they were not monarchs of Ireland

* O'Conor's Dissert., p. 251.

in the true and legitimate sense of the word.* Nor was there any prince after Malachy, for many years, who even claimed the sovereignty of the whole island. When this dignity was restricted to the alternate succession of the Clan-Colman and Tyrone houses, it was intended thereby to lessen the number of competitors for the crown, as well as to repress, in the several provinces, the insolence and domineering spirit of the aristocracy. But this end was not fully answered, at east to the extent that was anticipated by its projectors. The monarchy was rendered for some time, indeed, more respectable by such a restriction; but no addition was thereby made to the power of the crown. So one centre of union was wanted, round which the different contending parties, into which the kingdom was so unhappily divided, might occasionally rally; but so limited was the power which the monarch really possessed, that the sovereign throne proved but a feeble cement to the heterogeneous materials of which the nation was composed.

In this state of things it is not very surprising that a foreign enemy, like the Danes, accustomed to rapine and scenes of desolation, should take advantage of the divisions and factious feuds of the Irish people, and succeed so far as to make formidable settlements upon the sea-coast, and even to penetrate into the heart of the country. From the

* Those princes, who assumed the title of monarch without a due election were "stigmatized by our Senachies as *Righ, go Freasabhra*, or kings by force and violence, in opposition to those who were legally elected, and whom they called Luin Righ, or kings in the complete sense of the word." *O'Hal. ut supra*, Chap. II.

different engagements between the natives and the Northmen, it is easy to perceive, that it was not for want of courage the Irish were so frequently subdued: for had they only cultivated union amongst themselves, they could easily have expelled these freebooters from their coasts. But a spirit of discord, like a sullen and malignant cloud which refuses to depart, but envelopes the face of the country, and intercepts the prospect, still continued to operate upon the conflicting elements of which the nation was composed, and the foreigners gained ground rather by allying themselves with oppressed and oppressing chieftains, and by taking advantage of the various disputes that from time to time occurred between the native princes, than by any superior courage or abilities which they displayed in the field The provincial kings became every day more independent of the supreme authority, and even set up their own assemblies in opposition to the national Aonach, or meeting of the states of Tara;* and thus, by the seductions of fraud, or the assaults of violence, they became formidable rivals of the monarchs themselves.

The intercourse and alliances of the Northmen with the French and English, as well as with the inhabitants of Ireland itself, during the course of more than a century, had tended in some measure to soften their manners and to promote their civilization; whilst their conversion to the Christian religion, though it had not altogether eradicated their disposition for plunder and oppression, had an extensive influence in improving their morals and correcting their former habits of vice and depravity. But whilst

* O'Con. Dissert., p. 253.

the Danish settlers were benefitted by their residence in Ireland, their communication for so long a time with the natives tended considerably to render the latter both vicious and corrupt. Their example, like the pestilence which scatters ten thousand poisons from its baneful wings, had tainted the morals and infected the principles of the people with whom they associated. The extinction of public and private virtue was the consequence of that ignorance and barbarism which they had introduced; and, notwithstanding Ireland could still boast of her literary luminaries, it is obvious that learning began to decline throughout the country.

Through occasional alliances with these foreigners, the provincial kings frequently increased their own power, whilst that of the monarch was diminished in proportion: but notwithstanding all these confederacies and alliances with the domestic malcontents, the Northmen still continued a distinct and hostile people. Constantly recruited from the barren and frozen regions of Scandinavia, they were able to keep the Irish monarchs perpetually in the field and the natives in an unceasing ferment. In the beginning of the reign of Malachy the Second, this monarch had acted with energy and spirit in giving them opposition: but it was reserved for Brien Boru to crush their power effectually, and to emancipate his countrymen, though he sacrificed his own life in that patriotic enterprise. But notwithstanding Brien's accession to the sovereign throne proved ruinous to the foreign oppressors of his country, it became perhaps more so to his own subjects. The destruction of the monarchy may be justly dated from that revolution which opened to the provincial kings a way to the highest station

of authority and dignity in the kingdom, and awakened pretensions which had lain dormant for so many ages. And when the coercive energy of that mighty mind which had, for a time, confined the impetuous courses of refractory chieftains within certain limits ceased to operate, division and usurpation, like a destructive cancer, fastened their envenomed teeth in the vitals of the constitution, and the malignant influence was felt from the centre to the circumference of the whole island.

On the death of Malachy, as a revolution had been already effected, no prince appeared to have stronger claims to the throne of Ireland than the sons of Brien Boru. The signal services rendered to the nation by their illustrious father, the part which they had taken themselves in humbling the oppressive enemies of their country, and their own magnanimity and courage, all united to give their pretensions more than ordinary weight. But the unnatural jealousies and dissensions which prevailed between them deprived the nation of this advantage: and the people were doomed to experience all the miseries and calamities of those civil wars which ensued about the succession to the monarchy.

A. D. 1023. The two princes who had acted so nobly in the cause of their country, and who had escaped from the carnage of the plains of Clontarf, had immediately after their return home, as we have seen, turned their arms against each other; and, though they afterwards united against a common enemy, and seemed to be mutually reconciled, the reconciliation of such indomitable spirits was like the turbulent and outrageous tempest which sometimes seems to be assuaged, but only intermits its fury for the purpose of increasing

its strength and future impetuosity. Perceiving that whilst his elder brother Teige lived, he could only fill a secondary station, Donogh contrived to effect that by treachery which he was unable to accomplish in any other way. He therefore sent for the chief of Ely, and, by specious promises, as well as by large presents, prevailed upon him to surprise his brother the following night, and to carry him off prisoner to Ormond, where he was treacherously murdered a short time after by the people of that country.*

Alarmed at the rising power of the Heberians, and at the same time unable to agree among themselves about a successor, the Clan Colman suffered the principality of Meath, with some of the adjoining districts, on the death of Malachy, to fall under the administration of Cuan O'Lochain, arch-poet and chief antiquary of Ireland; and after him to be governed by a clergyman named Corcoran,† for what reason it is now very difficult to conjecture. The power, however, of each of these incumbents lasted but a short time; as the former was killed by the people of Leinster in the second year of his administration; and the latter is said to have become an anachoret, and to have died at Lismore some years after.

A. D. 1026. Meanwhile Donogh O'Brien began to make some show of royalty, and to assume the regal title, as soon as his elder brother was taken out of his way. Of the southern half of Ireland he was recognized as the sovereign;‡ and the following year, at the head of a

* Annals of Innisfallen, at A.D. 1023.

† See Lan. Eccles. Hist., Chap. XVIII.

‡ Annals of Innisfallen, at A. D. 1026.

numerous force, he invaded Meath, where he received hostages from the Clan Colman. He next proceeded to Dublin, and not only received the homage and submission of the citizens, but raised large contributions in that city. From Dublin he returned through Leinster to Kincora, compelling the Lagenians and Ossorians, in his way, to pay him tribute, and to give him securities for their future peaceable demeanour.* He next entered Connaught, and received from the Conacians the homa and tribute usually paid to the monarchs of Ireland. But whilst he was able to exhibit, not only in the two Munsters, but also in Leinster, Connaught, and Meath, the ensigns of sovereignty, and to assume the title of monarch, a powerful league was being formed against him, which ultimately proved too strong to be overcome either by his abilities or address.

Turlogh O'Brien, the son of Teige, soon after the murder of his father, had fled from Munster to Fearkall, the residence of his near relative, Dermod Mac Malnambo, where he was received with much kindness and cordiality. This prince, whose territories embraced the district which is now known by the name of the King's County, formed a strong party in favour of his kinsman; and, in opposition to Donogh, his exiled nephew assumed the title of monarch of Ireland, and was acknowledged as such by his own partisans and friends. In addition to this mortification, which of itself would have been sufficient to wound the ambitious and treacherous fratricide to the heart, the Lagenians, whose territories he had so recently entered in the character of monarch, collected all their forces, and by

* O'Hal., Book XII., Chap. II.

the way of reprisal, carried hostilities into the province of Munster; plundered, sacked, and burned the city of Waterford, and brought away with them a great number of cattle, as well as many prisoners that they had taken in the conflict.*

To enter into a detail of the proceedings of these two rival monarchs, and of their respective parties, would be quite unnecessary for any purpose of historical importance. For many years Ireland was a scene of outrage and violence committed by both parties according as the scale turned in their favour. In A. D. 1054, at the head of an army supplied by the kings of Connaught and Leinster, Turlogh invaded Munster and gained many advantages over his uncle: but Donogh did not fail to retaliate whenever an opportunity presented itself. In order to lessen the number of his enemies, he agreed in A. D. 1058, to exonerate the people of Connaught from the claims which he had made upon them, provided they would withdraw their forces from the assistance of his competitor; and two years after, he made a similar concession to the Lagenians. But Turlogh's influence had become too strong to be injured or impeded by the defection of these provincialists. At length Donogh made one effort more to expel his nephew from the province. He collected all his forces, and, at the foot of Ardagh mountain, met the army of his antagonist, but received a complete overthrow in that engagement. By these repeated defeats, his kingdom was gradually reduced to the province of Munster, and even that also he lost in the following year, A. D. 1064: for

* Warner, Vol. II, p. 230.

the Momonians had suffered so much in their unnatural contests, that they deserted his standard, and gave hostages to the other monarch for their future loyalty and allegiance to him.

Nothing is so effectual as conscious rectitude to inspire a dignity of mind superior to transitory events, or to create a calmness of temper unappalled by even death itself; but of this consolation Donogh had already deprived himself. Oppressed by the numerous misfortunes he had experienced in his declining years, and tormented by his own conscience for the injuries he had done to his nephew, as well as for the murder of his brother, his only hopes were placed in some extra-national power to restore him to that authority of which both his friends and his enemies had deprived him. In this state of his affairs he made a journey to Rome, and, it is said, carried the crown of Ireland with him, which he laid at the feet of Alexander II., the reigning pontiff; but, finding that he could obtain no help from that quarter, he renounced the world, took upon him the habit of a monk, and died in the monastery of St. Stephen, a short time after, in the eighty-eighth year of his age.*

This donation of the crown of Ireland to the pope has been supposed, by some, to render valid the grant that was afterwards made of the sovereignty of the island by that prelate to Henry the Second of England. "But," as Mr. O'Halloran observes, "admitting that he surrendered his crown to the see of Rome, it is evident it could not be the imperial crown, because he was neither elected nor crowned

* Annals of Innisfallen, at A. D. 1064.

monarch. It could not be the crown of Leath-Mogha, as from unerring records it appears, that he peaceably surrendered that to his nephew. But let us for once suppose, what was not the case, namely, that Donogh made a formal tender of the crown of Ireland to the pope; could the latter, or his successors, from this donation, found any claim whatever to the sovereignty of Ireland? Could an exile, an usurper, as Donogh undoubtedly was, transfer to any other a power which he had already surrendered to the legal proprietor? But, for argument's sake, let us admit him to be acknowledged as monarch in the fullest sense of the word; and that, in this character, he made a formal surrender of his crown and dignity to this pope, or to any other province; still, by the laws of Ireland, the moment of his death put a period to his delegation."*

This reasoning is conclusive, and, upon what ground soever the Roman pontiff might have granted Ireland to the English monarch, the conduct of such a prince as Donogh O'Brien could have given him no colour of pretence for claiming such a power.

If the most powerful prince in those times of anarchy and confusion, when the constitution of the country was so flagrantly violated, might be considered as the reigning monarch, Dermod, the king of Leinster, had an undoubted claim to that title upon the abdication of Donogh. This dignity, however, is not conceded to him, and Turlogh, though never elected to the monarchy in due form, assumed the sovereign power, as soon as his uncle had quitted the kingdom. It is true, Mortogh, the son of Donogh, a

* O'Hal., *ut supra*.

very valiant prince, made an unsuccessful attempt to dispute the crown of Munster with him; but Turlogh, with the assistance of his kinsman and ally, the Lagenian king, soon crushed this rebellious movement, received hostages from the Momonians, chased Mortogh into Connaught, and, for giving him shelter, reduced the king of that province to the necessity of purchasing a precarious peace at his own pleasure and that of his Lagenian ally. But the latter having, in the beginning of February, A. D. 1072, entered Meath in a hostile manner, which he had wasted several times before with great cruelty, he was defeated by Connor, the prince of that territory; and, in the bloody battle of Odhba, he fell a victim to his own temerity, as he was numbered amongst the slain.*

Being now left without a rival, Turlogh's first public act was to march into Ossory, Hy-Kinsellagh, and other parts of Leinster, and to receive hostages from the different princes and chieftains of that province. His army halted at Kilmainham; and there Gothric, or Godfrey, the Danish king waited on him and acknowledged himself as his vassal. After this he entered the city, the gates having been thrown open, and was received in form by the magistrates and citizens as their sovereign. Some time after he marched into Connaught, where he received homage and hostages from O'Conor the king of that province, from O'Rourk, prince of Breffny, from O'Reilly, O'Kelly, Mac Dermod, and several other princes and chieftains. Thence he proceeded to Ulster, but met with an effectual repulse from the Ultonians. But finding that the Danish

* Annals of Innisfallen, at A.D. 1072.

chieftain at Dublin, notwithstanding the readiness with which he had previously made a profession of his allegiance, had given the king of Ulster intelligence of his designs, and had even afforded the latter some private assistance, he banished Godfrey on his return, and appointed his own son, Mortogh, governor of Dublin and of the territory of Fingal in his stead.*

Encouraged by the failure of Turlogh's attempt upon the Ultonians, and wishing to assert their own independence, the people of Connaught were preparing to shake off the yoke; but having made a sudden descent upon that province, he surprised their king, seized upon his person, and obliged him to give fresh hostages for his future peaceable behaviour, before he would release him from his captivity. He next subdued the people of Uladh, and reinstated Dunlevy, their king, in his dominions, from which he had been expelled; and in the year 1082, that prince waited on him at his palace in Limerick, with his principal nobility, to thank him, and to do him homage as his chief: so that Turlogh continued gradually to add to his preponderance over different parts of the kingdom, until he might at length be styled truly monarch of all Ireland, though never elected to that dignity†.

But no degree of success or of worldly prosperity can ward off the stroke of death, or postpone the time of that event when the final summons has once arrived. This monarch had long been labouring under a chronic disorder, which at length deprived him of his life at Kincora, A. D.

* O'Hal., *ut supra*, Chap. III.

† Annals of Innisfallen, at A.D. 1073–1088.

1086, in the seventy-seventh year of his age, and the twenty-second of his reign.*

The character of Turlogh O'Brien stands high in the pages of history for justice, humanity, and generosity. These principles, however, which were undoubtedly associated in his mind, and which shed a lustre upon his actions in general, were sometimes sunk into a phase of obscurity, by the unhappy circumstances in which he was placed. The turbulence of the times, as well as the refractory disposition of the provincial dynasts and other princes, obliged him sometimes to resort to measures of seeming severity: but he never employed his power for the purpose of oppressing any of his people, or of depriving those princes under him of their legitimate or hereditary rights. He appears to have imitated the example of his grandfather, Brien Boru, as far as the distraction of the times would permit, in the establishment of good laws, the punishment of those who transgressed them, and in the protection and reward of merit, wherever it was to be found.† In a letter which he received from Lanfranc, the archbishop of Canterbury, that prelate says: "That God has bestowed his blessing upon the kingdom of Ireland, when he raised your excellency to the regal dignity of that kingdom, is evident to every considering person: our brother and fellow-bishop Patrick‡ has related

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* Ibid., at A. D.1086.

† Warner, Vol. II., p. 233.

‡ Patrick was the second bishop of the Danes of Dublin after their conversion to Christianity. He had been consecrated by this Norman Archbishop of Canterbury himself.

so many great and good things concerning the pious humility of your grandeur towards the good, strict severity against the bad, and your most discreet equity with regard to every description of persons, that, although we have never seen you, yet we love you as if we had, and wish to consult your interest, and to render you our most sincere service, as if we had seen you and intimately known you."*

In this letter, which was obviously designed to enlist the power and influence of the Irish monarch in bringing over the church in his dominions to a state of subjection to the see of Rome, as well as in forwarding his plans for establishing his own authority over the Irish bishops, Lanfranc styles him, "the magnificent king of Ireland," and uses such flattering expressions as would lead to a strong suspicion of the sincerity of his feelings. However, as the character which he has given of this prince corresponds with his general conduct, we need not be surprised at the eulogies thus passed upon his administration. Had he not possessed a large share of wisdom and discretion, as well as a noble and generous nature, he could never have governed a people, free even to licentiousness, with popularity and approbation, at a time when the nation was rent asunder by faction, his own title called in question by the greater part of the people, and his enemies both powerful and influential.

* Usser. Syllog. Epist. Hib., Ep. xxvii.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Irish Monarchy Anterior to the Ascension of Roderic O'Conor.

The death of Turlogh O'Brien proved another signal for faction to raise its head over the Irish nation. The monarchy had now become a mere name, without either vitality or prestige. The people were, therefore, accustomed for some time, to look upon this royal figment as upon an old banner over a tomb, in which all the muscular machinery of a strong man is passing into dust. The constitution was totally disregarded; the estates were not called together, nor had any regular election of a monarch taken place since the death of Brien Boru. Malachy had been restored to the throne by his own partisans in Meath, without any appeal to the constitutional electors; and Donogh, smitten by his own conscience, dared not appear as a candidate before a national assembly. In consequence of this state of affairs, every feudatory prince formed an independent interest, and felt unwilling to be eclipsed by another: so that the historians of this time have been obliged to consider the prince of the greatest power, as the nominal monarch of the country.

Immediately after the death of Turlogh, his son Mortogh* was proclaimed king of Leath-Mogha, and is ranked

* "Turlogh had four sons; Teige, who died soon after his father, at Cin-Corradh, Mortogh, who was his immediate successor; Dermod, who succeeded Murtogh; and Donogh, slain in Meath." O'Hal., Vol. III, p. 295.

next among the princes of Ireland. But he had a powerful rival in Donald O'Lochluin, who was also a candidate for the sovereign throne; and the rival claims of these two princes soon embroiled the country in a civil war, the former putting forward his pretensions under the sanction of the new order of things, which had introduced the provincial kings in the person of his great ancestor, Brien Boru; and the latter claiming a long prescriptive right of succession for many ages, in the royal Hy-Niall family, of which he was now the head.

To insure his power, as soon as his father was dead, Mortogh, having first banished his brother Dermod, led an army into Leinster, to receive the homage and acknowledgments of the Lagenians. Gothric, the former Danish king of Dublin, in whose stead Mortogh had been appointed by his father, had resumed the command of the city in his absence; but having been made acquainted with his approach, Gothric again fled from the country, and Mortogh appointed his eldest son, Donald, to the office of governor of that city.

Encouraged by this acquisition of the sovereignty of Leinster and Meath, Mortogh next carried his hostilities into Ulster, and compelled the petty chiefs of that province to pay him tribute. But Donald, prince of Tyrconnel, embraced this opportunity of causing a diversion in Munster; and at the invitation of Dermod, the exiled brother of the monarch, proceeded through Connaught with his army into the southern province, burned the palace of Kincora,* the city of Limerick, and several other towns;

* In the course of the war, when Mortogh entered Ulster, he retaliated by causing the palace of Aileach to be razed to its foundation. *Wills' Lives*, &c., p. 241.

and, with a number of prisoners, and the spoils of the Momonians, returned to his own dominions in the north.

To pursue these princes through all their various attacks and reprisals would be unnecessary: suffice it to say, that, for more than twenty years, they carried on a destructive contest, and the public interest was sacrificed to their wild ambition. The one generally possessed the sovereign command of the northern, and the other of the southern half of the kingdom; and in the protracted conflict which they carried on, sometimes the one, and sometimes the other party prevailed. Each of them being intent upon the object of his own ambition, they had many furious contests in the field; and many others were prevented by the intervention of the clergy, who endeavoured frequently, though sometimes in vain, to reconcile their jarring interests.* Every year, almost, produced the same series of ravages and plunder, the same bloody contests, and the same devastation of different parts of the country; and that which casts a deeper shade of gloom upon the aspect of these wars, is, that they were generally carried on against the property the innocent and unoffending. By destroying commercial security, they struck off the wheels of business, and cut asunder the sinews of industry. There could be little encouragement, under such circumstances, to cultivate any portion of the ground, or to take pleasure in improvements of any description, when everything lay at the mercy of lawless power; whilst tyranny, like a ravenous harpy, was ready to snatch the cup from the lips of industry, or wrest it, by violence, from the hand of liberty.

* O'Conor's Dissert., p. 255.

In the dreadful struggle between these two princes, they were sometimes in turn reduced, by each other, to the very brink of ruin; and again they compounded their differences, and seemed to part good friends. But their amity was neither lasting nor sincere. In the year 1099, Mortogh invaded Ulster with all the forces he was able to command; and was met on the plains of Muirtheimne, in the county of Down, by Donald, with the whole power of Ulster; but when the two armies were just about to engage in a dreadful contest, the bishops of Armagh and Cashel, with several other eminent ecclesiastics, threw themselves between them, and, through their intervention, the two parties were restored to peace. The result of this reconciliation was, that Donald was acknowledged as king of Leath-Cuin, and Mortogh, as king of Leath-Mogha; but it is probable that the latter reserved to himself the nominal title of Ard-Righ, or monarch of Ireland.*

By the wisdom and bravery which Mortogh had always evinced, his fame spread throughout the neighbouring states; and a short time after the consecration of Anselm to the archbishopric of Canterbury, he addressed a letter, "To Mortogh, the magnificent king of Ireland," in which he compliments him very highly for his prudence, fortitude and justice.† Some time after this, according to the chronicles of the Isle of Man, Lagman, the king of that island, after abdicating the throne, having gone on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and his brother Olave being a minor, the nobility of the island despatched ambassadors to Mortogh,

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* O'Hal., Vol. III., p. 297.

† Usser. Syllog. Epist. Hib., Ep. XXXVI.

requesting him to send them some diligent man of royal extraction, to rule over them during the minority of the young prince. In compliance with this request, the monarch sent Donald, the son of [illegible]ge, enjoining him to govern the kingdom with clemency and justice. But as soon as he was seated on the throne, he began to act the part of a tyrant, and behaved with so much cruelty and outrage, that the inhabitants, unable to endure his oppression, conspired against him, rose up in arms, and obliged him to fly, for safety, to his own country.*

It has also been asserted, upon the same authority, that Magnus, king of Norway, amongst other conquests, had subjugated the Isle of Man, sent his shoes to Mortogh, commanding him to carry them on his shoulders through the middle of his house, on Christmas day, in the presence of his messengers, as a mark of subjection and vassalage: that, though the Irish received this command with the greatest indignation, the monarch himself, conscious of his own weakness, meanly replied, that he would not only carry the shoes, but even eat them, rather than to provoke Magnus to destroy one province of Ireland: that he accordingly complied with the mandate, treated the messengers with great respect, and sent them back with presents for their master.†

The incredibility of these circumstances, detailed by the Manks Chroniclers, and the conduct imputed to the Irish monarch, being at such variance with Mortogh's character on every other occasion, the whole account has been reck-

* Camb. Brit. from the Chronicon Manniæ.

† Wood's Account of the Isle of Man, p. 341.

oned as a mere fabrication, unworthy of notice in the his
tory of this period.* The truth, however is, that Magnu
did send such a message to the king of Ireland; but th
details of the account seem to have been but imperfectl
known by either the chroniclers of Man or the writers o
Irish history. Mortogh's daughter had been married t
Sigurd, a Norwegian prince, and her father had entere
into a certain agreement with Magnus upon that occasion
but the impression which the terms of this treaty had mad
on the mind of the Irish monarch, was only as the trace o
an arrow through the penetrated air, or the path of a kee
in the furrowed wave. With the accustomed faithlessness o
that period, he had violated his engagement, and Magnus wa
resolved to make a descent upon his dominions, in order t
indemnify himself and his son. He had already been suc
cessful, not only in the conquest of the Island of Man itself
but of the Orcades, the Hebrides, and the island of Angle
sea :† and he hoped, from the divided and distracted state
of the Irish people, to be equally so in his attempt upon them
also. His message was, therefore, designed to be merely a
challenge to the Irish monarch, as he could not have expected
that Mortogh would comply with it. But instead of receiv-
ing his messengers with respect, as has been asserted, that
monarch ordered their ears to be cut off, in the presence of
his court, and desired them to inform their master, that
this was the only answer he would return to his insolent
demand.‡

* See Warn., Vol II., p. 238.
† Wood, *at supra*, pp. 340, 341.
‡ Bruodin Chronicle, quoted by O'Halloran.

A. D. 1101. Not only incensed with the manner in which his messengers had been treated, but learning, upon inquiry, so much of the salubrity of the climate, the fertility of the soil, and the beauty of the country, Magnus turned his thoughts wholly upon the conquest of Ireland, as a valuable addition to those he had already made. He, therefore, gave orders for the preparation of a large fleet, as well as of a considerable body of land forces; and in the mean time, sailed, with sixteen vessels, that he might take a view of the country himself. But, having incautiously left their ships, his party were surrounded by the indignant Irish, who lay in ambush to receive them; and Magnus himself, with nearly all his followers, fell a sacrifice to the fury of the incensed natives.

The ravages and distresses which the ambitious conduct of the two rival monarchs,—the one in the north and the other in the south,—had brought upon Ireland, appear to have made, at length, an indelible impression on their own minds, in the latter part of their lives. Men of little minds frequently cast the blame of their conduct upon others; or, if they find no better means of clearing themselves, they endeavour, by specious reasons or false pretences, to justify their own proceedings. But this was not the case with these two potentates. It is said that they both became great penitents, and endeavoured to make some compensation to the public, and especially to the Church, for all the evils which their crimes had brought upon their unhappy country. Mortogh, we are informed, convened the estates of Munster at Cashel, after his reconciliation with his powerful rival, and with their consent alienated for ever that city from the provincial crown,

and appropriated it to the church.* The subsequent part of his reign was marked with the same solicitude for the interests of the public: but being in a declining state of health, he solemnly renounced the crown of Munster in favour of his brother Dermod, A. D. 1116, and retired to the monastery of St. Carthagh, at Lismore, where he died a great penitent, in the month of March, 1119, and was buried with much funeral pomp at Killaloe.† His great Ultonian rival survived him but two years. The latter having entered the monastery of St. Columba at Derry, died there in the seventy-third year of his age.

A. D. 1119. Towards the conclusion of a monarchy thus divided between two rival princes, Turlogh, the young king of Connaught, surnamed the Great, had set himself in opposition to them both; and, on the death of the latter, he was almost without a competitor in his pretensions to the sovereignty of the whole kingdom. He was not, however, left to enjoy that dignity without a considerable degree of molestation and disturbance. It is reasonable to suppose that he grasped at sovereign authority as soon as Donald had departed this life, but he was so far from really possessing the power of a monarch, that some writers reckon seven-

* "A convocation of the people of Leath Mogha, or the southern half of Ireland, was held at Cashel, at which Murtogh O'Brien, with the nobles of the laity and clergy, and O'Dunan, the illustrious bishop and chief senior of Ireland attended, and on which occasion Murtogh O'Brien made such an offering as king never made before him, namely, Cashel of the Kings, which he bestowed on the devout, without the intervention of a laic or an ecclesiastic, but for the use of the religious of Ireland in general."—*Annals of the Four Masters, at* A. 1101.

† See Annals of Innisfallen at the respective dates.

teen years of an interregnum, from the death of Mortogh till the accession of Turlogh to the throne of Ireland.

Turlogh was the son of Roderic O'Conor, the king of Connaught, and was a descendant of the Hy-Brune* branch of the Heremonian race. From this branch were likewise descended the O'Flahertys and O'Maillys of Connaught; the O'Reillys of Eastern Breffny; the O'Fallons or Falloons of Clan-Madach; the O'Flins, and many other families of considerable repute. The cognate branch of this illustrious family was the Hy-Fiacras† of Tir-Fiacra and Tir-Awly. Besides these names, so distinguished in Irish history, the Hy-Brunes are the ancestors of the O'Conor Don, the O'Rourkes, who for a time obtained the sovereignty of Connaught; and the Mac Dermots, who were hereditary mareschals of the western province.

Turlogh O'Conor was the first of his family, since the reign of Eochy Maymedon in the fourth century, who, from being king of Connaught had aspired to the monarchy. At a time when faction and turbulence carried every thing before them, and when the estates were not assembled at Tara, as the constitution required in order to proceed to a regular election, the succession to the national throne was generally determined by the sword. Connor

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* "So called from Brian, the eldest son of Eochy Maymedon, king of Ireland, A. D. 35 This Eochy was the father of Niall the Great, and king of Connaught before his election to the Teamorian throne."—*O'Con. Dissert., Note at* p. 282.

† "So called fr Fiacra, another son of Eochy Maymedon, and the father of L ay, the last of our heathen monarchs, killed in Lombardy, and buried in Relig-na-ri, near Cruachain"—*O'Con., ut supra*, p. 282.

O'Brien, called Slaparsalach, or of the dirty robe, had succeeded his father Dermod, in 1120, on the throne of Leath-Mogha; and, being a prince of a brave and enterprising disposition, he was as ambitious of obtaining the monarchy as Turlogh was, and proved a powerful rival to the latter, while endeavouring to attain to that distinguished station. Dermod, the father and predecessor of Connor, had, some time before his death, invaded Connaught; and Turlogh retaliated, in the second year of Connor's reign, by marching his forces to Cashel, Lismore, and other places in Munster, and sorely harassing the innocent and unoffending inhabitants; but the Momonians attacked them on their retreat, near Ardfinan, and completely dispersed them, after having lost many of their chiefs, as well as a considerable number of their troops of an inferior grade.

Turlogh, however, was not to be disheartened by such a defeat as he had now received; and, in the month of November following, he entered Munster again at the head of a more powerful army than the last. For upwards of two months his troops remained encamped near Birr; and, though his followers appeared inactive during that time, he was not idle himself in promoting the special object which he had in view. On this occasion he used all his influence and address to separate the Eugenians from the Dalcassians, by representing to them how long their family had been deprived of their right of succession to the throne of Munster. Incensed by the hints thrown out by this subtle Conacian, Donogh MacCarthy, and several other Eugenian princes, entered into a private treaty with Turlogh. But notwithstanding his success on this point, he saw that the

Dalgais, so long as they continued to be united, were still a formidable body, and that it was therefore necessary to sow the seeds of dissension among them. When Connor had been proclaimed king of Leath-Mogha, his next brother, Turlogh, succeeded to the throne of Thomond; but, at the instigation of the king of Connaught, Teige Gle O'Brien, a younger brother, who treacherously seized his person, had him conveyed to the camp of the Conacians, and usurped the title and dignity of which he contrived to deprive him. The Dalcassians were by this means divided; and, by supporting Donogh MacCarthy against his elder brother Cormac, the cunning Conacian prince sowed similar dissensions among the Eugenians.

A. D. 1122. Sensible that in a time of anarchy and public discord every thing is to be effected by promptitude and intrepidity, Turlogh proceeded to compel the people of Leinster, Meath, and Dublin, to give him hostages; and, in the following year, he entered Ulster at the head of a gallant and well appointed army, and, having overrun Tyrone and Tyrconnel, he obliged the chiefs of these two great houses, together with several others, to submit to his power and to acknowledge his authority.

A. D. 1127. Having resolved to crush the power of Munster, Turlogh collected all his forces, and, in 1127, crossed the Shannon at Athlone, and marched without opposition as far as Cork. Here he was joined by Donogh MacCarthy and other Eugenian princes, who became more closely attached to his interest from his deposing Cormac, the elder brother, and causing Donogh to be proclaimed king of Desmond. Having thus placed Tiege O'Brien on the throne of Thomond, and Donogh MacCarthy on that

of South Munster, he thereby circumscribed the power of Connor, the king of Leath Mogha; but the latter, after taking such steps as strengthened his own interest, marched his army into Desmond, recalled Cormac from the monastery of Lismore, whither he had retired, restored him to his throne, and drove Donogh and his party into Connaught.

A. D. 1132. Having established his authority at home, Connor next compelled the Lagenians to return to their duty and to acknowledge him as their chief; invaded Connaught, and defeated the Conacians in a battle fought near Athlone, in which he was met by the collected forces of that province. Similar success attended his arms in the following year; but having entered Connaught again, in some time after, with a determination to subdue Turlogh, or to perish in the attempt, a peace was concluded between them, through the interference of the clergy, in which Connor was acknowledged as king of Leath-Mogha, and Turlogh king of Leath-Cuin, perhaps reserving to himself the title of Ard-Righ, or nominal monarch of the country.

Connor, who was a prince of considerable policy, as well as of invincible courage, did not dismiss his auxiliaries, as was usual on such occasions, but marched at their head into Ulster, carrying on a war in that province rather of depredation than of conquest.* Alarmed by his proceedings, and fearing the loss of such things as were valuable, the people of Tyrone had their effects of this description deposited in the church of Derry, and other sacred edifices, as places of the greatest safety. The people of Tyrconnel

* O'Hal., Book XII., Chap. V.

had imitated their example, and lodged theirs in the cathedral of Raphoe. But Connor had little regard for the sanctity of such places; and, in his progress, he plundered all the churches and monasteries as he passed along, and appropriated all he could seize to his own use. Nor did he cease to be the scourge and vexation of his country, until death put an end to his ambition and cupidity, in the month of November, A. D. 1142, and thus freed his great western rival from that incessant annoyance which he occasioned in the kingdom.

But, notwithstanding Turlogh O'Conor was delivered from a powerful antagonist by the death of Connor O'Brien, Turlogh O'Brien, the brother and successor of the latter, bid fair to be as troublesome to him as his predecessor had been. Amidst all the opposition, however, which this monarch experienced, he not only maintained his own ground, but generally subdued those princes and chieftains that opposed him. Dermod Mac Murchad, the king of Leinster, a man whose name is associated with the total dissolution of the Irish monarchy, and who was at this time hated by his own subjects, was a prince whom he frequently chastised: and indeed all the provinces felt the weight of his resentment. But, towards the end of his reign, he found in Mortogh O'Lachluin, prince of the north Hy-Nialls, and grand-nephew of the late Donald O'Lochluin, a powerful and influential antagonist. They attacked each other with various success both by sea and land;* and, it is said, that the monarch's power was so much humbled by this northern dynast, that he was obliged

* O'Con. Dissert., p. 257.

to give him hostages as a security for his peaceable behaviour, even six years before he died. The latter, who brought the remains of the Danes and the naval power of North Britain to support him in the contest, was, however, defeated in the end. But the death of Turlogh put a period to this collision of conflicting interests, and delivered into the hands of Mortogh the sovereignty of the greater part of the whole island.

The true character of Turlogh O'Conor could be but imperfectly exhibited in the distracted state of public affairs during the whole period of his administration. He was a prince of great abilities and resolution; but when it is asserted that he died "in the highest estimation for piety,"* the intelligent reader will scarcely give credit to the statement. No monarch ever experienced more of the uncertainty and versatility of professed friends, nor defeated the designs of his enemies with greater success. His simulation and dissimulation were most unscrupulous, whenever he had any particular object to accomplish; and such was the command which he possessed over his own temper that he had always the advantage of his most powerful opponents.

But Turlogh, though exhibiting failings of a very grave character, was not without his virtues both as a man and a ruler. As well as the distraction of the times would permit, he reformed the civil constitution; and his efforts for the good of the nation, under the most inauspicious circumstances, like well-disposed shades in painting, threw an additional lustre on the more ornamented parts of his

* See O'Hal., Vol. III., p. 316.

character. His piety seems to have consisted, in repairing the cathedral of Tuam, erecting a spacious hospital in that city; and there, as well as in other places, evincing the most liberal munificence to the church.* He also repaired the public roads, threw two spacious bridges over the Shannon, one at Athlone, and another at Ath-Crochta, besides a bridge which he built across the river Suck. His love of justice, and his inflexibility in punishing those who dared to violate the laws, were so great, that when Roderic, his own son, was imprisoned for some offence, he refused to release him for the course of a year; and, even then, it required the united influence of some of the most distinguished ecclesiastics to prevail upon him to exercise his royal clemency in the liberation of the delinquent. In short, had this prince been placed under less inauspicious circumstances, or had he been born two or three centuries earlier, his talents would have raised him to an equality with the most distinguished monarch that ever ruled the Irish nation; and then, perhaps, he might have been entitled, with some degree of justice, "Turlogh the Great."

A. D. 1156. The change of circumstances which so considerably augmented Mortogh's power, seemed to promise the restoration of the Hy-Niall family to the sovereignty of Ireland; but the prevalence of faction, and the contumacy of those who were sensible that their own influence would be abridged by the existence of a regular monarchy,

* "But say, ye casuists, did he, or his formidable rival, Connor O'Brien, really merit this epithet (*pious*) so liberally bestowed on both? Will the erecting of a few churches and monasteries atone for the immature death of thousands, and the ruin of as many more?"—O'Hal., Vol. III., p. 316.

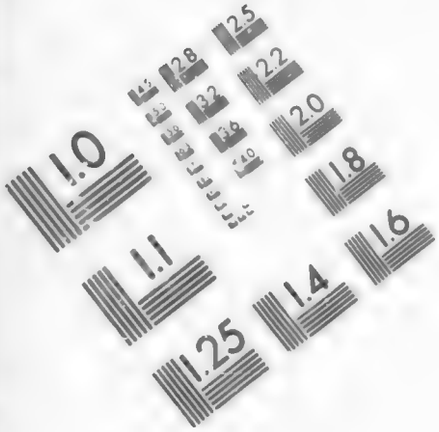
disappointed the expectations of such as had the real interests of their country at heart. Perhaps the impetuosity of this prince, as well as the advice of evil counsellors, had an extensive influence in producing this effect. Like a woman of fierce vindictive hate who finds her affections first a matter of speculation and subsequently of outrage, this monarch was resolved to humble and punish those princes, who had acted a double part towards himself during the lifetime of his Conacian antagonist. A short time, therefore after the death of his rival, he was to be seen marching his army in triumph through different territories, and receiving the submission of their respective chiefs. In the year after his assumption of the monarchy, having first overrun Ulster, Meath, and Leinster, he entered Munster, encamped before Limerick, and obliged the princes of both Munsters, as well as the people of that city, to do him homage, and to deliver him hostages for their future fidelity.

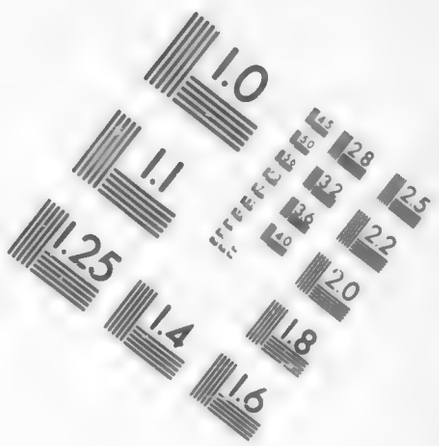
The only prince of distinction who was able to dispute his authority, or to give him any disturbance, was Roderic O'Conor, the son of Turlogh the Great, who had succeeded his father on the Conacian throne, and now bid defiance to the power that Mortogh had assumed. Having invaded the monarch's own territory of Tyrone, he ravaged the whole country, and laid waste the most fruitful and cultivated places in that district, as indifferent to the miseries which he was then creating as is the dancing brook to the overshadowing willow. In the same manner he visited Munster, Leinster, and Meath, receiving hostages from their princes, and trampling upon the rights and liberties of the people. Meanwhile Mortogh was by no

means inactive, either in giving opposition to the king of Connaught, or in subduing those princes who refused to acknowledge his authority. Every province in Ireland, and almost every considerable territory, was visited by the royal army, and the most signal success generally attended Mortogh's standard. Even Roderic himself felt the effects of his power upon some occasions; and, in 1162, was obliged to submit to the terms of a peace which were highly honourable to the monarch. Had the calm which ensued for a short time been real, or the result of measures which could promise its permanence, it could not have failed to give pleasure to all the lovers of their country; and as the rainbow glows with the greatest beauty when appearing on the darkest cloud, so the disastrous circumstances which had immediately preceded it would have had a tendency to set it off to the greater advantage. But this delusive peace was rather like that listless languor which sometimes ensues when the animal functions are clogged, and the powers of nature cease to act with their accustomed energy · and subsequent events soon ruffled the stillness of this repose, and scenes of blood marked the conclusion of the reign of this impetuous and injudicious monarch.

Intoxicated with success, and stimulated by the advice of evil counsellors, on a slight offence given him by Eochy, an Ultonian prince, Mortogh entered his dominions with an armed force, committing various depredations amongst his people, and carried away captive many of his vassals.

A peace, however, through the mediation of the successor of St. Patrick in the see of Armagh, and the prince of Orgial, was concluded between the monarch and this





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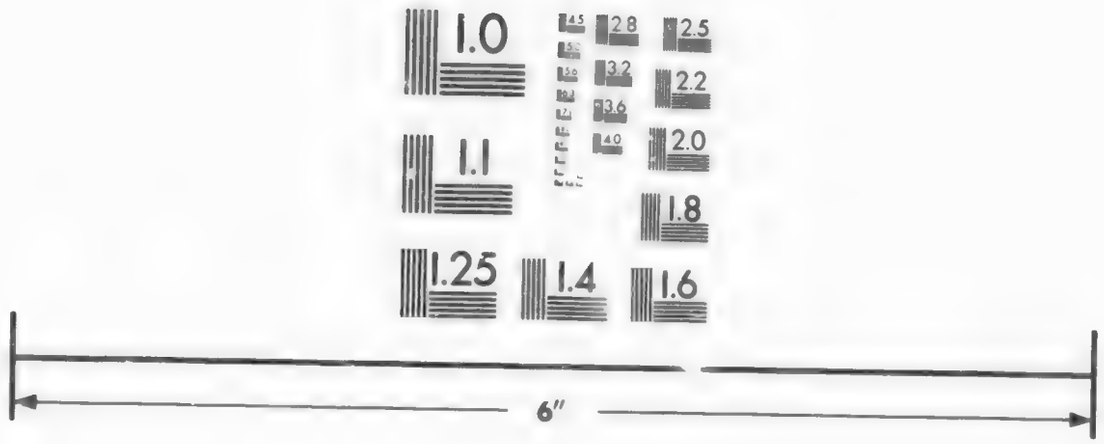

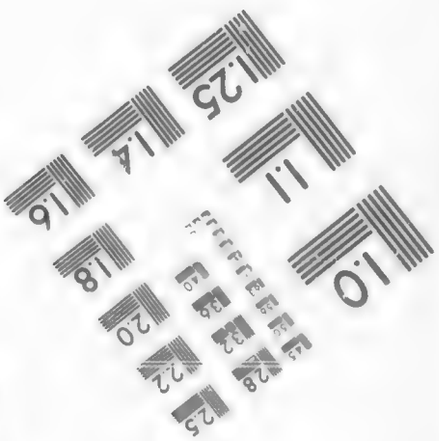

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dynast; and was solemnly ratified by oath in the presence of that prelate and other witnesses. But the very next year, from what motive it is impossible to ascertain, having seized upon Eochy, Mortogh caused his eyes to be put out, and three of his chief confidants to be assassinated. Enraged at so flagrant a violation of public faith, the king of Orgial, who had been one of the guarantees of the peace, collected all his forces, rushed suddenly into Tyrone, and in the engagement which ensued, and which the Irish annalists call the battle of Litterluin, defeated the few tumultuary troops which Mortogh was able to collect on such a surprise, and the monarch himself was found buried under heaps of his enemies.

A. D. 1166. Thus, after a reign of ten years, Mortogh, fell a sacrifice to the vengeance of a much-injured people; and the Hy-Niall interest having sunk with him to rise no more, a way was opened to Roderic O'Conor to ascend the sovereign throne, which was occupied but a short time when the Irish monarchy itself arrived at its final dissolution.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Irish Church from the Danish Invasion till the accession of Roderick O'Conor.

The Danish invasion proved highly detrimental to the interests of the Irish Church, and the subsequent events connected with the conversion of the invaders to Christianity ultimately led to the final subjugation of its hierarchy, to the dominion and authority of the Roman pontiff. It was impossible that any country should have been invaded by such barbarous and uncivilized enemies, its schools of learning destroyed, and its most eminent ecclesiastics obliged either to conceal themselves in various secluded retreats or to seek an asylum in foreign lands, without feeling the deteriorating effects of such a visitation. Such was the vast emigration of learned men from Ireland which took place in the ninth century, that almost every country in Europe began to reap immediate benefits from it. "Why should I mention Ireland," says Eric of Auxerre, "almost the whole nation, despising the dangers of the sea, resort to our coasts with a numerous train of philosophers, of whom the most learned enjoin themselves a voluntary exile, to be in the service of our most sagacious Solomon."*

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* "Quid Hiberniam memorem, contempto pelagi discrimine, pene totam, cum grege philosophorum, ad litora nostra migrantem? Quorum quisquis peritior est ultro sibi indicit exilium, ut Solomoni sapientissimo famuletur ad votum."—*Præfat. Act. S. German.*

Nor was it merely in the diffusion of learning and religion that they conferred benefits on those countries that afforded them an asylum: but as a French historian observes, the face of the country where they took up their abode was changed by the very labour of their hands. "It must be acknowledged," says he, "that these crowds of holy men were highly useful to France, considered merely in a temporal light. For the long incursions of the barbarians having quite desolated the country, it was still in many places covered with woods and thickets, and the low grounds with marshes. These pious religious, who devoted themselves to the service of God, not to a life of indolence, laboured with their own hands to grub up, to reclaim, to till, to plant, and to build, not so much for themselves, who lived with great frugality, but to feed and cherish the poor; insomuch, that uncultivated and frightful deserts soon became agreeable and fruitful dwellings. The heavens seemed to favour the soil reclaimed and cultivated by hands so pure and disinterested. I shall say nothing of their having preserved almost all that remains of the history of those times."*

Amongst the numerous lettered emigrants of this age, whose names have been transmitted to posterity by foreign writers, as well as by their own countrymen, Johannes Scotus Erigena was the most prominently celebrated. He was born some time in the early part of the ninth century, and was a most learned and accomplished scholar before he fled to France, in 846, together with some of his countrymen who had escaped the fury of the Danes at that

* Mezer, Hist. de la France, Tom. I., p. 117.

calamitous period. Of this distinguished and eminent man, a well known ecclesiastical historian observes: "The philosophy and logic that were taught in the European schools in the ninth century, scarcely deserved such honourable titles, and were little better than an empty jargon. There were, however, to be found in various places, particularly among the Irish, men of acute parts and extensive knowledge who were perfectly well entitled to the appellation of philosophers. The chief of these was Johannes Scotus Erigena, a native of Ireland, the friend and companion of Charles the Bald. Scotus was endowed with an excellent and truly superior genius, and was considerably versed both in Greek and Latin erudition. He explained to his disciples the philosophy of Aristotle, for which he was singularly well qualified by his thorough knowledge of the Greek language: but as his genius was too bold and aspiring to confine itself to the authority and decisions of the Stagyrite, he pushed his philosophical researches yet further, dared to think for himself, and ventured to pursue truth without any other guide than his own reason. We have extant, of his composition, five Books concerning the divisions of nature, an intricate and subtle production in which the causes and principles of all things are investigated with a considerable degree of sagacity, and in which also the precepts of Christianity are allegorically explained; yet in such a manner as to show, that their ultimate end is the union of the soul with the Supreme Being. He was the first who blended the scholastic theology with the mystic, and formed them into one system."*

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist., Cent. IX.

Scotus, whose character was acknowleged to be excellent even by his enemies, was admitted to the friendship of Charles the Bald upon account of his various and manifold accomplishments. This prince was so much pleased with his learning, eloquence, and wit, that he kept him constantly with himself, and honoured him with a place at his own table. The works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite had in that age excited much interest amongst the French, owing to an opinion which then prevailed that he was the same as St. Denis, the first Bishop of Paris. As Scotus was well skilled in the Greek language, he was commissioned by the king to translate these works into Latin, a task which he performed with such ability and accuracy as to give great satisfaction to his royal patron, to whom he dedicated the performance.* Of this work, Anastatius, Librarian of the Roman see, about seven years after its publication, in a letter written to the king, remarks:—"It is wonderful how that barbarous† man, who, placed at the extremity of the world, might, in proportion as he was remote from the rest of mankind, be supposed to be unacquainted with other languages, was able to comprehend such deep things and to render them in another tongue. I mean John the Scotigena, whom I have heard spoken of as a holy man in every respect. But he has greatly diminished the advantage that might be derived from such an undertaking, having been over-cautious in giving word for word—which I think

* Usser. Ep. Hib. Syllog., Nos. 22, 23.

† Usser. Ibid., No. 24.—With the most consummate arrogance, it was usual for Roman writers in that age, to denominate every man *barbarous* who was not a Greek or Roman.

he had no other reason for than that, as he was an humble man, he did not presume to deviate from the precise meaning of the words, lest he might in any wise injure the truth of the text.'"

In the meantime a question in polemic Divinity which had before disturbed the peace of the Church, respecting predestination and the efficacy of divine grace, was revived in France by the writings of a monk named Godescalcus; and, after various disputants had appeared in the field, Hincmar, the Archbishop of Rheims, and Pardulus, the Bishop of Laon, applied to Scotus to draw up a treatise upon this subject. With this request he complied, and some time before the year 852, he published his work in nineteen chapters. In this book, which he dedicated to the two prelates who had induced him to undertake the task, he professed to follow closely the doctrine of the most celebrated of the Fathers, but notwithstanding this profession, it was condemned by the third council of Valence, about three years after its publication, and represented by the divines of that synod as being replete with impertinent syllogisms, containing inventions of the Devil rather than any proposition of faith.* It was also warmly attacked by several of the predestinarians, amongst whom the names of Prudentius, Bishop of Troyes, and Florus, a Deacon of the Church of Lyons, were the more conspicuous.†

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* "In quibus commentum diaboli potius quam argumentum aliquod fidei deprehenditur."—*Fleur. Lib.* XLIX. *Sect.* 23.

† "In their answers, they charge Scotus with the doctrines of Pelagius; and it would seem by them, as if his writings were not only condemned, but he himself confined for publishing them. *O'Hal., Vol.* III., *p.* 194.

Nor were the subsequent publications which issued from the pen of Scotus less offensive to some of his theological opponents than this treatise on the doctrine of predestination. During the ninth century a controversy respecting the Eucharist engaged the attention and exercised the ingenuity of some of the most eminent scholars in France. Haimo, Bishop of Halberstad, and his followers maintained that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper contained neither sign nor mystery, inasmuch as the sign was necessarily excluded by the reality. This argument, which was the legitimate offspring of the doctrine of the corporal presence, did not satisfy the minds of others; and Hincmar, Paschasius, and some other divines of more moderate views, admitted both the sign and the reality; whilst a third party, with Bertramn, or Ratramn, a monk of Corbie, at their head, contended for a triple distinction of the body of Christ;* namely, his natural body which was born of the Virgin, his sacramental body contained in the Eucharist, and his mystical body the Church. In the disputes which were carried on by these subtle theologians, each party in turn made frequent appeals to the king; and it was probably owing to this circumstance that Scotus was induced to involve himself in the controversy. As his Book on the Eucharist is not now extant, it is impossible to say with certainty what were the exact shades of opinion advanced by the author, but certain i' is, they were opposed to the doctrine of the corporal presence, or that which is called in more modern times transubstantiation.†

* Lingard's Antiq. of the Anglo-Saxon Church, p. 496.

† Ascelin, who lived in the eleventh century, and who had read his treatise, says, that "like a poisoner, he presented some

The intrepidity with which Scotus supported his opinions on this question against so many powerful and influential opponents evinces a degree of moral courage which few men have possessed, even under more favourable circumstances. Not only had his former works been condemned by two councils and a pope, but his translation of the works of Dionysius, though rendered so literally as to incur censure, was exposed to the same suspicion and animadversion. It is said that Nicholas, the Roman pontiff wrote to his royal patron about this performance, complaining that the author, though a man of erudition, was suspected strongly of heterodoxy; and that therefore the book should have been sent to him, for his approbation before it was published:* but what action the king took in consequence of this letter is not known with certainty.

When, or in what manner Scotus died is not authentically recorded:† but whilst his great erudition reflected honour upon his native country, and his knowledge not only of the Greek and Latin, but also of the Oriental languages, proved the flourishing state of letters amongst the Irish in that age, his great humility and moral circumspection extorted even from his enemies the reluctant acknowledgment that he was a man of sterling worth and exemplary piety. Other countries have claimed the honour

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things apparently sweet, but which would produce death; and that, though he alleged passages of the Fathers, he spoiled them by his glosses."—*Lanigan's Eccles. Hist.*, *Vol.* III., *Chap.* XXI., Note 93.

* Spottiswoode's Church History.

† O'Halloran says "he returned to Ireland in 864, and died there in 874;" but upon what authority we know not.

of his birth,* but that he was a native of Ireland his name sufficiently evinces, and the testimony of foreigners who knew him personally, puts it beyond all doubt. His works are numerous; for besides those already mentioned he translated the Greek Scholia of St. Maximus on difficult passages of Gregory Nazianzen; and is likewise considered to have been the author of a tract upon the differences and agreements of the Greek and Latin Verbs.†

The number of learned ecclesiastics who flocked from Ireland to the continent of Europe in this age, and their obvious dissent from those churches that were under the jurisdiction of the Roman pontiff, could not fail to excite the apprehensions of those who in more modern times would be denominated the Ultramontane party; and in the year 813, a decree was passed, in a council held at Chalons-sur-Saone, forbidding certain Irishmen who gave themselves out to be Bishops, to ordain priests or deacons without the consent of the Ordinary.‡ Nor was this alarm confined to one particular locality, but it extended itself to almost every place to which the Irish emigrants had directed their course. So early as the latter part of the seventh century, Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, had decreed that they who were consecrated by Irish or British bishops, should be consecrated anew by a Catholic one; and in the year 816, the council of Cealc-hy ordained "that none of the Irish extraction" should be permitted to usurp to himself the sacred ministry in any one's diocese, nor should he be allowed to touch any thing which belonged

* See Led. Ant,. pp. 176, 177.

† Usser, Ep. Hib. Syllog., No. XXIII.

‡ Fleur, Hist. Eccles., Lib. XLVI. Sect. 5.

to those of the holy order; that the laity should not receive anything from him in Baptism, or in the celebration of the mass, nor were such priests to administer the Eucharist to the people, "because" say the Council, "we are not certain how, or by whom they were ordained. We know it is enjoined in the canons, that no bishop, or presbyter, invade the parish of another without the bishop's consent; so much the rather should we refuse to receive the sacred ministrations from other nations, where there is no such order as that of metropolitans, nor any regard paid to the other orders." *

In England, it appears, an objection was raised to the validity of Irish orders, because the hierarchy of the country had no metropolitans, nor was it in conformity with the Roman model, with its incidental titles and appendages. But in France, other ground was taken, as it was said that the ordinations performed in that country by the Irish were irregular and most simoniacal: the latter calumny, however propagated only by their interested detractors, is sufficiently silenced by an appeal to the character of the eminent divines and indefatigable missionaries who have been thus so recklessly traduced.

The conversion of the Danes to Christianity, about the middle of the tenth century, gave the first effectual stroke to the independence and purity of the ancient Church of Ireland. Before the invasion of these foreigners, she had nobly adhered to the doctrines and discipline which had been established in that country by St. Patrick and his successors. The plausible fictions which ultimately super-

* Led. Ant., p. 393.

seded them were unknown in Ireland under its ancient polity, and continued to be so in the remoter districts till, by the influence of priestly intrigue and the united policy of England and Rome, a complete spiritual revolution was effected at a subsequent period.

The first of the Scandinavian settlers that, in any great number, embraced the Christian faith were those of Dublin; but it does not appear that their change of profession made any alteration in their predatory habits, or their predilection for murder and robbery.* The perpetual wars excited by these barbarians had been as inimical to literary repose as they had been destructive of literary memorials; and, instead of joining with the natives, after their conversion, to revive those institutions which their remorseless fury had nearly annihilated, they were the means of subverting, in part, the independence of the Irish Church, and introducing the Benedictine order,† with its usual concomitants of superstition and ignorance.

In the eleventh century these strangers had kings in almost every part of the island. Sitric, the king of Dublin, erected a see within the walls of that city, over which Donatus was appointed to preside as their first bishop.‡ The mutual hostilities, which had been continually carried on between the native Irish and these foreigners, became a

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* See Ware. Ant., C. XXIV.

† Led. Ant., p. 427.

‡ The first bishop of Dublin was called Dunan, or perhaps Donogh, which was Latinized into Donatus. Doctor Ledwich says he was a Dane. (Ant. Ire., p. 428.) But judging from his name, he was most probably an Irishman.—See *Lanigan, Vol.* III., p. 433, Note 135.

barrier to any friendly intercouse with each other afterwards in religious matters: and, it is said, that this first prelate in the see of Dublin was consecrated by the archbishop of Canterbury and not by any of the bishops of the Irish Church. It is certain, however, that the city of Dublin received the episcopal dignity from the English primate;* and thus was a church erected in the island under the immediate jurisdiction of that dignified ecclesiastic, and without any connexion with the Patrician hierarchy so long established amongst the Irish people. To Donatus was granted by this Danish prince the site on which Christ's Church Cathedral now stands, for the erection of that sacred edifice: lands were also appropriated for its endowment,† and an episcopal residence was built adjoining to it, on the spot where the old "Four Courts" formerly stood, together with the chapel of St. Michael in the same neighbourhood.

On the death of Donatus,‡ the clergy and people of Dublin elected a priest named Patrick as his successor, and recommended him to Lanfranc, the archbishop of Canterbury, for consecration. In their letter of recommendation, in which they "offer due obedience" "to the venerable metropolitan of the holy church of Canterbury," they style Dublin, "the metropolis of the island of Ireland;" for what reason it is difficult to determine, as

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* "Antecessorum enim vestrorum magisterio semper nostros libenter subdimus a quo recordamur nostros accepisse dignitatem ecclesiasticam."—*Usser, Syllog., p.* 100.

† Lan., Vol. III., p. 434.

‡ A. D. 1074. See Ware's Bishops.

the new see was confined to the city, its bishops having no power except over the Danes of Dublin, and consequently no jurisdiction over any portion of the Irish bishops. Hitherto the successor of St. Patrick in the see of Armagh had been considered the *primus* amongst the bishops of Ireland, but they had no metropolitan in the strict sense of the word; for, as we have already seen, the English objected to their orders on that account.* But the bishops of Armagh had continued the unjustifiable custom of hereditary succession, had refused to submit to the authority of the canon law, and had evinced a disposition to maintain the independence of the Irish Church, all which must have been very offensive to the English primate, who was a Norman by birth and a rigid disciplinarian; he therefore hailed with delight this opportunity of humbling the Armachian prelates for their long continued obstinacy, by acknowledging the metropolitical dignity to belong to another who was likely to be more obsequious to his wishes in chaining the Irish Church to the foot of the papal throne.

The consecration of the new bishop of Dublin, which took place in St. Paul's Church, London, was preceded by a profession of obedience, in which the spiritual superiority of the English primate was explicitly acknowledged. It was in the following form:—"Whoever presides over others ought not to scorn to be subject to others, but rather make it his study to humbly render, in God's name, to his superiors the obedience which he expects from those, who are placed under him. On this account, I, Patrick, elected prelate to govern Dublin the metropolis of Ireland, do,

* See Led. Ant. Ire., p. 393.

reverened Father Lanfranc, primate of the Britons, and archbishop of the holy Church of Canterbury, offer thee this charter of my profession; and I promise to obey thee and thy successors in all things appertaining to the Christian religion."

By this profession of obedience the new bishop of Dublin became a suffragan of the see of Canterbury; and on his return to Ireland, Lanfranc gave him a written testimonial of his consecration, together with two private letters, one addressed to Gothric, sometimes called Godred Mac Regnal, in which he styles him "the glorious king of Ireland;" and another to Turlogh, "the magnificent king of Ireland." In his letter to the former, this prelate adverts to some customs which, it is probable, still prevailed amongst the foreigners, notwithstanding their nominal profession of the Christian religion, and which he desires that prince to correct, such as the marriage of women too near akin either by affinity or consanguinity, the separation of wives from their lawful husbands,* and also the exchange of wives, which they sometimes practised.

A similar complaint is reiterated in his letter to Turlogh, but this is no proof that these practices prevailed amongst the native Irish. Although Gothric is called king, he was at that time a vassal to the monarch, having submitted to him as his liege sovereign in 1073; and notwithstanding Lanfranc speaks of these evils as existing in Turlogh's dominions, it is most probable he alluded to that part of the kingdom which was held by Gothric under him.†

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* Vide Usser. Syllog., p. 70.

† See Lanigan, *ut supra*, p. 476.

With respect to marriages contracted within the prohibited degrees of affinity or consanguinity, it may be observed that the Irish Church had no rule of faith and practice but the written word of God.* Her members therefore paid no attention to those prohibitions that were contained merely in the canon law, but contented themselves with the precepts of the Divine law on this subject as laid down in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus. This was therefore the ground of Lanfranc's charge against the Irish clergy respecting their uncanonical marriages.

Other practices of the Irish, of which the Archbishop complains in these letters, were such as no enlightened divine, even of the Church of Rome, could absolutely condemn. He says that bishops were consecrated by but one, and that children were baptized without chrism; and he represents these as contrary to evangelical and apostolical authority as well as repugnant to the injunctions of the sacred canons. But he overlooked the circumstance that Augustine, his predecessor, notwithstanding the presence of at least three prelates was required at the consecration of a bishop, had been exempted from this obligation by Gregory his patron, and permitted by him to perform the ceremony alone without any assistants. It is true, that this relaxation of the discipline of the Church was to

* In the Irish canon entitled, "Of consanguinity in marriage," which is the 29th of what is denominated the *Synod of St. Patrick*, we have these words: *Intelligite quid lex loquitur, non minus nec plus.* "Understand what the law says, not less nor more." This was the uniform language of all the Irish ecclesiastics on every other subject.

cease with the circumstances which rendered it necessary,* but it was an acknowledgement that, even in the opinion of that pontiff, consecration by but one bishop was perfectly valid. With respect to the baptism of children without chrism, it is too puerile a subject to require any observations.

In order to remedy these supposed evils, Lanfranc advises Turlogh to assemble a synod of his bishops and clergy, at which he and his nobles might attend,† that they might correct these irregularities, as well as put a stop to all others that were in opposition to the sacred laws of the Church.

The insinuating address and artful manner of this crafty prelate soon produced the desired effect upon some of the clergy of Ireland. Many of them became dissatisfied with the simplicity and unostentatious observances of their mother church, and were disposed to make some innovations on her rituals and discipline; whilst others, probably terrified by the success of the Normans against their English neighbours, judged it better on this occasion to endeavour the conciliate a formidable power than to provoke a contest in which their own success must have proved extremely doubtful. Influenced therefore by a variety of motives, they are said,‡ towards the beginning of the twelfth century, to have admitted Giselbert, or Gilbert, the bishop of Limerick as legate from the Roman pontiff.

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* Bed. Hist., Lib. I., Cap. XXVII.; Ling. Ant., p. 239.

† Usser. Syllog., p. 72.

‡ S. Bernard. Vit. Malach, 1693.

No prelate could have possessed the legatine authority who was better qualified to push forward the object of his mission than this Ostman divine. He had become acquainted at Rouen, with Anselm,* who succeeded Lanfranc, and having imbibed the principles of that well-known ecclesiastic, he soon proved himself to be the obsequious instrument of the court of Rome. There is a small tract preserved by Archbishop Usher, which was written by Giselbert for the use of the Irish, and obviously designed to give them a relish for the Romish hierarchy, as well as to instruct them in the principles upon which it was constructed. This production was accompanied by an allegorical drawing formed of three arches. The highest was covered with birds, representing the angels in heaven; the middle, or this world, was filled with men; and the lowest, or infernal region, was crowded with animals and reptiles, types of its inhabitants. He likewise describes the Church under the form of a pyramid. The base represents the laity, then succeed monks and the lowest clerical orders; their head is the priest. Above him are bishops, archbishops, and primates; and the pope is seated upon the apex, as indicative of his supremacy over the whole. There is some ingenuity in this design; but perhaps, as he wanted to establish the principles of the Roman hierarchy, it would have been more expressive of what he intended had he inverted the order of his materials, and placed the pontiff in the position which he assigned to the laity, making him the basis or foundation upon which the superstructure rested.

In the struggle which was carried on in England

* Usser. Syllog., p. 88.

between the king and the archbishop of Canterbury about the right of investitures, the Church having been ultimately successful,* the Bishop of Limerick is said to have sent a present of twenty-five pearls to Anselm as the champion of their common order, and to have congratulated him upon that criminal triumph which he had obtained over his sovereign and the laws of his country.† Encouraged by this token of the good will of such an influential prelate as the Bishop of Limerick, and having his hopes excited by the admission of a papal legate into Ireland, the English primate in the following year addressed a letter to his reverend fellow-bishops in Ireland, in which he exhorts them to vigilance and severity in ecclesiastical discipline, and tells them that if any disputes respecting the consecration of bishops or other causes could not be settled canonically among themselves, to have the matter brought before him for decision.

This apparent want of humility and modesty, on the part of the English archbishop, was not so culpable as some might be disposed to imagine, since the prerogatives of the Irish monarchy had been virtually and voluntarily compromised, when Turlogh recommended to that prelate a bishop for the new see of Dublin.‡ Nor had his son Mortogh, who succeeded him, acted a more dignified and independent part when he joined his nobility and clergy in a similar line of conduct by sending Malchus to be consecrated at Canterbury. Embroiled not only in family

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* Hume's Hist. of Eng., Chap. VI.

† A. D. 1094.; Usser. Syllog. p. 88.; Led. Ant., p. 435.

‡ See Harris at *Donat. O'Haingley*

disputes, but in conventions with provincial kings, the monarch hoped for assistance from England, and therefore felt disposed to conciliate every agent in that country that he thought might be serviceable to his cause. Anselm, who knew well how to take advantage of every circumstance in his own favour, perceiving that an opportunity now presented itself for the augmentation of his power, was resolved to embrace it with that adroitness which was peculiar to his character; and for the purpose of accomplishing this object, he addressed two epistles to the monarch, in which he applies the flattering appellation of his "glorious son and most beloved in God."* His complaints respecting the uncanonical state of the Irish Church were similar to those to which Lanfranc, his predecessor, had formerly given utterance; and he advises Mortogh to call a council in which ecclesiastical matters might undergo the necessary revision and amendment.

In compliance with this expressed desire of the archbishop, the Irish monarch, A. D. 1111, assembled a council of the nobility and clergy at a place called Fiadh-Ængusa, or Ængus's Grove, in Meath, where, according to the *Chronicon Scotorum*, fifty-eight bishops, three hundred and seventeen priests, and sixty deacons, with several others who filled the inferior offices of the church, assembled. As this was the first instance that had ever occurred in which a papal legate was permitted to preside over a council of Irish bishops; and as the monarch and chiefs of the land were to be in attendance, the conflux of clergy and others was probably the greater. O'Halloran, who affects to think

* "Gloriose fili et in Deo carissime."—*Usser. Syllog*, p. 95.

that a reformation was greatly wanted, gives us a summary of the supposed evils that prevailed in the country, which this council was designed to correct; and as the more impartial mode of exhibiting their real nature, we shall make our statement in his own words:*—

"First, it is certain," says he, "that bishops were multiplied amongst us at the will of the metropolitan,† and often without any fixed places of residence: secondly, the power of nominating bishops to certain dioceses was reserved to certain royal and noble families, in different parts of the kingdom, and to them only: thirdly, though the Church of Ireland was in exact conformity with that of Rome, in the doctrines of faith,‡ and submitted to her decisions in many instances of discipline, as in the tonsure, the celebrating of Easter, &c., yet it does not appear that the popes ever enjoyed any direct power or authority whatever over that church. We have seen briefs and letters directed to the Irish bishops; but I cannot find that they deemed themselves schismatics,§ when they thought fit to

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* O'Hal., Vol. III., pp. 300, 301.

† There were no Metropolitans in the Irish Church before this time; and as we have already seen, by the decision of the council of Cealc-hythe, the English had objected to the orders of the Irish clergy on that ground.

‡ This is more than apocryphal. "THE THREE CHAPTERS" were altogether *doctrinal*, and yet the Irish Church opposed most strenuously the decisions of Rome on the doctrines which they contained.

§ It is certain the Irish bishops did not consider *themselves* schismatics when they refused to obey the Roman pontiff, because they knew he had no scriptural or legitimate authority over them. But what did the popes of those times think of their conduct? Did *they* consider them schismatics or not?

refuse the decisions of Rome, as they did for more than two centuries with respect to the feast of Easter:—fourthly, in some instances* bishops have been married men; but no proofs whatever can be produced that the popes nominated to bishoprics amongst us;—and, fifthly, it appears evidently, that the Irish bishops enjoyed no exclusive privileges whatever; though Columba formerly strongly contended for the Church's being an asylum. On the contrary, the Irish clergy were subject to temporal laws, and temporal taxations. They were obliged in person to attend the royal standard; and I take it for granted that as feudal lords, they were obliged to bring a certain quota of troops into the field also; yet, with all this, in no part of the world were the clergy more respected; but to the exemplary lives they led, they owed this. Synods and council they held from time to time, to correct abuses in the church, but the archbishop of Armagh constantly presided as patriarch, and their decisions were, for near two centuries, received in England, and, until the twelfth century in Scotland."†

These matters having all been settled in the council to the entire satisfaction of the legate, and the number of bishoprics in Ireland having been reduced to twenty-eight, the council was dismissed. Two objects, it will be perceived, were kept in view by those who had the manage-

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* It would have been but fair to have stated that from the days of St. Patrick the bishops and inferior clergy had never had any vow of celibacy imposed upon them, and were generally married men.

† "From this account," says O'Halloran, after making the above statement, "it will appear, that reformations were wanting in ecclesiastical discipline."—*Hist., Vol. III., p.* 301.

ment of the synod; namely, that, the number of bishops being diminished, the whole hierarchy might be rendered more manageable by the pope, and his agents; and that by the reduction of the number of dioceses, and the consequent augmentation of episcopal revenues, the clergy might be rendered more respectable. But to effect such an extensive change in the economy of the Irish Church required some time; and the proceedings of this synodical assembly were only the commencement of that work which was ultimately accomplished.

The ancient Irish writers have given to the place at which this council assembled three different names, and having used them indiscriminately, some of the moderns, being ignorant of the ancient topography of the country, have supposed that there were three different councils called, and held respectively at Fiadh-Ængusa, Uisneach, and Rath-Bresail. But every one acquainted with the early topography of Ireland knows that Uisneach was a mountain in the centre of Meath, on which the temple of Bel stood in pagan times. This sacred edifice, as all druidical houses were, was erected in the middle of a large grove, called Fiadh-Aengusa, and a fort adjoining it was named Rath-Bresail; so that these three names were applicable to the same place. Their indiscriminate use has therefore been the origin of that groundless supposition to which we have referred.*

The activity of the Irish monarch in bringing about these measures, which had now received the sanction of about one-sixth of the national clergy, proceeded, no doubt,

* O'Hal., *ut supra*, *p.* 303.

from a secret motive. Henry I, of England, having, on the death of William Rufus, usurped the throne, in the absence of his elder brother Robert, a combination of some of the principal nobility was formed against him in favour of the latter. Amongst these were Robert, earl of Shrewsbury and Arundel, and Arnulf de Montgomery, his brother.* Arnulf is said to have solicited Mortogh for his daughter, and some assistance; but though he obtained the former, it is probable that the monarch had too much to contend with at home to give him any aid in his perilous enterprise. The failure, however, of the plan to place Robert on the throne obliged Arnulf to seek an asylum at the court of the Irish monarch; and, in a letter to Anselm, Mortogh thanks him for interceding for his son-in-law, and adds, "be assured I will obey your commands." This gave an impetus to Mortogh's zeal; and as Anselm could always improve most skilfully such a favourable opportunity of promoting his own purposes, it is probable that he used his influence at this particular juncture to induce the monarch to make those changes in ecclesiastical matters which he wished to bring about in Ireland.

The clergy in the latter country, however, could not altogether forbear from showing some dissatisfaction at the subversion of their own independence as a national hierarchy. They perceived that the church of their forefathers had been basely maligned and misrepresented;† that under

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* Hume's Hist. Eng., Vol. I., Cap. VI.

† In general the discipline of the Irish Church had so little correspondence with that of the Roman, "that it received several hard names from the papal writers of the 12th century. Pope Alexander and Cambrensis call it *filthy*; Anselm and Gilbert, *schismatical*, Bernard, *barbarous*, and *almost pagan*.—*Phelan's Policy, &c.*

the specious name of reform, their ancient discipline was now about to be reduced to a mere nonentity; and that an extensive change was now in progress in their ecclesiastical polity by which they must shortly be placed, without any appeal, under a foreign jurisdiction. It is therefore no wonder that their jealousy should have been excited, and their national spirit roused, by those measures which had been adopted in the council so recently held for the purpose of bringing about those changes. Aware of this feeling which so generally prevailed, the clergy and burgesses of Dublin sometime afterwards informed Anselm's successor in the primacy of England, that the Bishops of Ireland, and especially Celsus of Armagh, had evinced the greatest indignation towards them, because they had shown a desire to be under his spiritual jurisdiction, and had not submitted to receive ordination from those prelates that belonged to the national Church of Ireland.* Had this laudable and patriotic spirit been roused in time, it might have prevented much of the evil which ensued, but it was now too late to attempt to oppose the tide which was settling in so powerfully against them. The Irish primate, as he may henceforward be called, was not himself much opposed to the religion of Rome, nor had he any great objection to the power and authority of the pope, but he was unwilling to separate from his wife and children,—a measure which had now become a *sine qua non* with the Romish party.

As soon as Malachy O'Morgair, who succeeded Celsus, found himself in possession of his new dignity, he is said to have solicited the archiepiscopal pall from Pope

* Usser. Syllog., p. 100.

Innocent II.; but from prudential motives the pontiff declined conferring this distinguished honour upon him at that time.* He was well aware that the great body of the Irish clergy were still tenacious of the independence of their national church; and until they should be sufficiently prepared to acknowledge the plenitude of his authority, the pall, so far from commanding respect, would probably expose the wearer, and consequently the authority of the donor, to insult and derision. Upon this ground alone it is probable the pope refused to comply with Malachy's request; for it is obvious that the latter stood very high in the favour and approbation of the court of Rome.

Notwithstanding Malachy was only three years in possession of his see, having been compelled to relinquish it to an hereditary claimant, he still continued to use every exertion for advancing the papal cause in his native country. Influenced and directed by St. Bernard, who was afterwards his biographer, he introduced, about the year 1140, the Cistercian order into Ireland, and founded establishments for them at Newry, Mellifont, Bective, Boyle, Baltinglas, Nenagh, and Cashel. Thus by the unwearied and persevering exertions of papal agents (the princes of Ireland having lost much of the spirit and power of their predecessors, and internal dissensions prevailing throughout the nation), the ancient religious system of the Irish people was gradually undermined; and encouraged by these circumstances, the Roman pontiff thought proper in 1155, to send John Paparo, Cardinal of St. Laurence in Damaso, into Ireland with legatine

* S. Bernard. Vit. Malach., Cap. XI.

authority, for the purpose of settling the Irish hierarchy upon a new and more permanent basis.

Immediately after the arrival of this foreign ecclesiastic, a council was convened at Kells,* in which Christian, Bishop of Lismore, presided;—a man who had received his education under the tuition of St. Bernard at Clairvaux, and who was consequently inclined to promote the power and influence of the pontiff with all the energies he was capable of commanding. Nor was it without an object worthy of the papal cause that the cardinal had been sent on this mission, armed with legatine authority. The power of the pope was at this time unlimited in other countries, and the existence of a church in any part of Europe that would not yield implicit obedience to his commands must have been highly offensive to a prelate whose claims had become so unlimited in their extent. To prepare the way, therefore, for the unreserved submission of the Irish Church to the authority of the pope; to new-model her hierarchy so as to make it more manageable by papal agents; and to lay the foundation of a revenue in future which was expected to flow into the Roman treasury, were the principal objects of Paparo's mission. It was impossible, however, to accomplish any of these designs unless an extensive change could be effected in the constitution of the Church in Ireland; but a step having been taken already in this direction, by the reduction made in the number of the Irish bishoprics, the cardinal, in order

* The names of the prelates who were present at this assembly are given by both Ware and Keating, but it is highly probable that the list is incorrect, if not an absolute forgery.

to compass his ends with the greater facility, bestowed four archiepiscopal palls upon the bishops of Armagh, Dublin, Cashel, and Tuam; and these, together with the bulls for the other bishops, were the means of raising a considerable sum for recruiting his resources. He is also said to have established the payment of tithes,* and to have endeavoured to extirpate simony, than which no vice had been more prevalent in Europe during the middle ages.† It was usual for the great lords, who had erected sees and endowed them out of their own estates, to bequeath them to their wives and children, or to dispose of them publicly to the highest bidder. This traffic however was almost wholly unknown amongst the Irish in the earlier stages of their ecclesiastical history. Bad as the system of hereditary succession was, it proved while it existed a powerful preservative from the evils of simony: for those Irish lords who had now embraced the Romish party and adopted their measures, found that by the change they had made, a more extensive market was opened for the sale of ecclesiastical livings than that which they had enjoyed when the possession of the see was confined to their own sept or clan.

By the depredations of the Danes, and a variety of other untoward circumstances, the sources of learning and information had been long since almost totally destroyed in Ireland; and, as a necessary consequence, ignorance, superstition, and immorality, began to take the place of

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* For the origin of tithes, and whether they should be considered of divine right, see Father Paul's treatise of *Eccles.* and *Benef. Rev.*, Cap. XI. and XXI. They had not been established in Ireland before this time.

† See Mosh. Eccles. Hist., Cent. XI.

true religion amongst a large proportion of the inhabitants of the country. Uniting the vices of their ancestors with those of their bloodthirsty invaders, they became, during the tenth and eleventh centuries, a comparatively degraded and degenerate race. Many of the people who had either retained or revived some of the superstious rites of their pagan ancestors, and who had only transferred the tutelage of sacred wells, fountains, and groves from the imaginary deities to whom they had been originally dedicated, to some patron saint, either of foreign or native extraction, were now sunk in ignorance and superstition: and it was an easy matter, under these circumstances, to impose upon their simplicity and to fetter their minds with those terrors which the dreams of religious enthusiasts were calculated to inspire.

In this process of religious deterioration, the Irish were helped forward to a considerable degree by the cunning ingenuity and unscrupulous tutelage of some of the English monks. An impious fiction was invented about this time in order to work upon the hopes and the fears of the credulous multitude. In 1153, the very year after the meeting of the council of Kells, Mat. Paris relates the visions of Owen, an Irish soldier, which the latter saw in St. Patrick's Purgatory, on an island in Lough Derg;—a place that is still frequented by a great number of pilgrims, who fancy that by the observance of a round of performances prescribed at that station, they can purify themselves from all the defilements of sin, and purchase a good reward in the life that is to come.

Lough Derg lies in the southern part of the country of Donegal, near the borders of Fermanagh and Tyrone, and

is surrounded on every side by bleak, barren hills, covered with heath and almost entirely destitute of any human habitation.* Its locality was well calculated to work upon the imagination of a credulous and simple-hearted people; and the story of the Irish soldier was swallowed with avidity by Henry, a Cistertian monk, and embellished with all the ingenuity that he was capable of displaying. "Christ," says he, "appeared to St. Patrick, and, leading him to a desert place, showed him a deep hole, and told him whoever repented and was armed with true faith, and, entering that pit, continued there a night and day, should be purged of all his sins; and also during his abode there, should not only see the pains of the damned but the joys of the blessed." It is added that St. Patrick immediately built a church on the spot, and placed therein regular canons of St Austin.†

Notwithstanding a large accession had been made to the ranks of the papacy by the circumstances to which we have adverted, and more especially by those changes which had attended the mission of Paparo, yet the Roman pontiff began to think that his success in the complete subjugation of the Irish church was still highly problematical; and consequently he deemed it prudent to entrust the management of this affair to a more potent as well as an equally

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* For an interesting account of this ancient seat of a foolish and degrading superstition, the reader is referred to Hardy's Holy Wells of Ireland, pp. 1-26.

† Led. Ant., p. 446. The anachronism in it spoils the whole of this story. Regular canons were unknown to St. Patrick, as they had no existence in any part of the church before the *tenth* Century.—See Spanheim, Tom. II., p. 492; *Mosh.* Cent. XI.

interested agent. He therefore issued in the year 1155, a bull, in which, after claiming the sovereignty of the island, he bestowed Ireland on Henry II. of England, that he might extend the borders of the church and of religion, extirpate vice, and reform evil manners, provided he should pay yearly to St. Peter a penny for each house, and preserve the rights of churches. The consequences, however, of this donation, and all the calamities which ensued to the Irish people, may be best learned from the authenticated details of the subsequent part of this history.

CHAPTER XV.

Invasion of Ireland by English Adventurers.

The death of Mortogh and the powerful influence which Roderic O'Connor had already obtained over the different states of the nation, gave him great facility in assuming the sovereignty and in having his title acknowledged almost universally throughout the kingdom. The Princes and Chieftains were assembled at Dublin, and though there was much insincerity in the part which they took upon this occasion, they appeared unanimous in the election of Roderic;* and he was accordingly acknowledged in the most solemn manner as the supreme rule of the whole island.

But this Prince soon found, notwithstanding his power in his own province, the interest of his family, and the reputation which he had acquired in arms, that such a recognition, when it was rather extorted from the factious state of divided provinces than won from the affections of a loyal and devoted people, was but a feeble security to the permanence of his administration. From the time of the battle of Clontarf and the death of the renowned monarch that fell upon that occasion, the nation had been making rapid strides towards its own destruction; and when Roderic succeeded to the monarchy, the measure of its iniquity was nearly full. Notwithstanding the unanimity with which he seemed to be elected, he had reason, from his own expe-

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* (O'Con. Dis. 259.)

rience, to suspect the facility with which it was done; and, at the head of his troops, he made a [illegible] through the greater part of the island, receiving hostages from the several princes, and making presents in return, according to the custom observed upon such occasions. It was not long, however, before several of them revolted, and those who, a little before, had been emulous in making professions of loyalty to the new monarch, soon laid him under the necessity of chastising them for their seditious conduct, and extorting from them that submission which they were otherwise unwilling to yield to his authority.

1167. Whilst Roderic was engaged in making preparations for the complete subjugation of the territories of Tyrone under the Hy-Niall princes, a circumstance occurred which retarded the accomplishment of this object, and laid the foundation for that extraordinary revolution which followed, and which for a long period proved so fatal to the Irish nation. Dermod Mac Murchad, the provincial dynast of Leinster, had long conceived a violent affection for Dearbhargil, daughter to the King of Meath; and, though she had been married to Tighernan O'Ruarch, prince of Breffny, his passion had not been cooled nor put under that restraint which such circumstances would demand. The lovers therefore contrived to carry on a clandestine correspondence with each other; and in the absence of O'Ruarch, who, being obliged to visit a distant part of his territory, had left his wife secure, as he thought, in an island surrounded by a bay, Dermod, at the lady's request, entered Breffny, seized upon her person, and had her conveyed to Ferns,

* O'Hal. vol. III. p. 328-9.

the capital of Hy-Kinselagh.* This outrage committed in so flagrant a manner against a prince who had been most devoted to the interest of O'Connor, could not fail to excite just indignation in the mind of the monarch when he heard it; but, if this feeling had been wanting on Roderic's part, the following letter addressed to him by the prince of Breffny would, no doubt, have contributed to awaken him to a sense of his duty:—

"*O'Ruarch to Roderic the Monarch, health:*

"Though I am sensible, most illustrious prince, that human adversities should be always supported with firmness and equanimity, and that a virtuous man ought not to distress or afflict himself on account of the levity and inconstancy of an imprudent female, yet, as this most horrible crime (of which I am fully satisfied) must have reached your ears, before the receipt of any letter, and as it is a crime hitherto so unheard of, as far as I can recollect, as never to have been attempted against any Irish king—severity impels me to seek justice, whilst charity admonishes me to forgive the injury. If you consider only the dishonour; this I confess is mine alone: if you reflect on the cause; it is common to us both! For what confidence can we place in our subjects, who are bound unto us by loyal authority, if this lascivious adulterer, or rather destroyer of chastity, shall escape unpunished, after the commission of a crime so flagitious. The outrages of princes so publicly and so notoriously committed, if not corrected, become precedents of pernicious example to the people. In a word, you are

* Cambrens., p. 760.

thoroughly convinced of my affection and attachment to you. You behold me wounded with the shafts of fortune, affected by numberless inconveniences, and sorely distressed with the greatest afflictions! It only remains for me to request, as I am entirely devoted to you, that you will not only with your counsels assist, but with your arms revenge those injuries which torment and distract me. This, when you will, and as you will, I not only ask but earnestly beg at your hands. Farewell."

As soon as the monarch received this letter, he resolved upon giving assistance to the injured prince; and immediately dispatched a body of troops, which, together with his own forces and those of Meath and Ossory, enabled him to march to Dermod's residence, and to make such a successful attack upon him, as to oblige him to make his escape to Bristol with about sixty of his followers. The castle of Ferns soon surrendered; for Dermod, before his escape, had been deserted by the nobility of Leinster, the military, and even by his own principal favourites and dependents. Hy-Kinselagh was therefore divided between the prince of Ossory, and Murcha, a chieftain of the same family with the exiled provincial; and seventeen hostages were brought to the monarch as security for the future good behaviour of his former subjects.*

When the demands of public justice and national honour had been thus far complied with, Roderic prepared to execute his previously contemplated enterprise against the house of Tyrone. At the head of a well-appointed army, in

* O Hal., Vol. III., p. 331-2.)

conjunction with a numerous fleet which scoured the seas and cut off supplies from North Britain, he marched into Ulster, and compelled the Hy-Niall chieftain to pay him homage, and to deliver hostages into his hands for his future loyalty and good behaviour. After his return to Connaught, and in the same year, he assembled the states of Leath-Cuin, at Athboy, in the county of Meath, where many wholesome laws were made, as well for the government of the church as the state. (This assembly, which was numerously attended, was the last of the kind that was ever held by the Irish monarchs. How long it continued we are not informed; but besides Roderic himself and 13,000 horse, it was honoured with the presence of O'Malachy, king of Meath, O'Ruark and O'Reily, princes of the two Breffnys, O'Dunlevy, King of Ulida, O'Felan, prince of the Deasies, and many other chieftains, together with the archbishops of Armagh, Dublin, and Tuam, and a great number of bishops, abbots, and inferior clergy.)

1168. The crazy state of the government, notwithstanding the splendid display of regal pomp made at this meeting, was at this time sufficiently apparent in the disorders and outrages which occurred in different parts of the kingdom. In the beginning of the following year, Murrogh O'Brien, king of Thomond, was killed, by his own cousin Connor, or by the people of Desmond, and was succeeded by his brother Domhnal, in the throne of North Munster. A short time after this outrage the people of Dealbhna, attacked O'Fennelan, their natural lord; and, together with a number of his adherents, he fell by their hands. Several other acts of violence proclaimed that the inhabitants of this country were ripe for a visitation of Providence; and, had that change

which followed conferred upon them the benefits of any regular system of government, it ought to have been viewed as a blessing rather than as a calamity, by the candid historian who would attempt to record the events of this time. But, whilst domestic feuds and intestine animosities, which had already dislocated the bands of society, were arming one party against another, events were preparing the way, in another country, for that change in the government of Ireland, which, for ages afterwards, was attended with the most deplorable consequences, but which Divine Providence no doubt intended for the ultimate happiness and true interest of the people of that island.

Henry Plantagenet, the first of the Anjou race that filled the English throne, and a prince of such unbounded ambition that he considered the whole world little enough for the dominion of one sovereign, had long contemplated the extension of his power over Ireland and Scotland; but circumstances had hitherto been unfavorable for accomplishing his design. The crazy state of the Irish constitution, and the continual disorders which had so long prevailed amongst the people, exposed the country to the attempts of any ambitious potentate; but Henry's predecessors had been incapacitated by their own domestic weakness to avail themselves of the advantage which these circumstances presented to their attention. During the existence of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy, the same causes which would have exposed Ireland to a successful invasion from the other side of the channel, operated as powerfully in England itself; and scarcely were these petty states united in the ninth century under the dominion of Egbert, when the Scandinavian adventurers, the common

scourge of the west of Europe, began to infest the coasts of England, and to oblige the inhabitants to take measures for their own defence, rather than to seek for advantages against their Hibernian neighbours. Scarcely had these northern freebooters ceased from their predatory wars, and coalesced with the natives of the country, when England was again reduced to a state of deplorable slavery by a new host of adventurers, more advanced indeed in the arts of life, and under a less irregular government, but hardly less cruel and insolent than its former invaders.

Harassed, in common with other countries, by the desolating incursions of the northern pirates, the French were obliged, in 911, to cede the provinces of Neustria and Bretagne to Rollo, one of their leaders, whose followers, called by the French *Normans*, settled in the country, and, from its new inhabitants, Neustria received the name of Normandy. William, surnamed the Bastard, who, about a century and a half after this settlement, had inherited the ducal diadem of Normandy, demanded, on the decease of Edward the Confessor, the crown of England, in consequence of a will which, he averred, had been made in his favour by that weak prince; but his claim was rejected, and with the concurrence of the people of England, Harold, a great and warlike nobleman, ascended the throne. William, however, being resolved that his claim should not be set aside with so much facility, assembled an army of resolute adventurers, invaded England in 1066, and at the famous battle of Hastings, decided the fate of that kingdom by the death of his rival, and the subsequent maltreatment of the unfortunate inhabitants. To this prince, now surnamed the Conqueror, his second son, William Rufus,

succeeded; and to him, by usurpation, his younger brother Henry, to the exclusion of Robert, the eldest son of the conqueror; to Henry, his nephew Stephen, usurper of the throne from Henry's daughter, Matilda; and to Stephen, in the year 1154, Henry the Second, the son of Matilda, by Geoffrey Plantagenet, count of Anjou.

This prince, whose designs against Ireland had been long in contemplation, found several obstacles in his way, arising from a combination of circumstances over which, notwithstanding his great abilities, he had little control. However, as the injustice of his cause was not amongst the number, by the assistance of John of Salisbury, an intriguing ecclesiastic, he found means of overcoming every difficulty; and an alliance with the court of Rome, from a pretended zeal for religion, and a real, though latent, design of violating all its laws, was agreed upon, in order to give this zeal some colour, even in that age, dark and ignorant as it was.* This alliance with a power which he hated, was mortifying to all the feeling of the English monarch, but he felt it was necessary towards the accomplishment of his wishes; and, it is probable, he secretly resolved to overreach the Roman court, if possible, in her own lucrative bargain. To Adrian IV, therefore, his application was made; and that pontiff, besides being an Englishman and amicable to the king, was glad of an opportunity of augmenting the papal power, and more fully reducing the Irish to the authority of a church, of which they had been long the strenuous and successful opponents. A bull was accordingly issued by his holiness in favour of

* O'Con. Dissert, p. 261.

the English monarch, a ring was presented to him in token of his investiture as rightful sovereign of the Irish, and Henry was commissioned, like another Josnua, to enter Ireland in a hostile manner, and to put the inhabitants to the sword for the good of religion and the reformation of manners. But whilst the eradication of irreligion and immorality was made the plea for this invasion, a stipulation was required from the king on the part of his holiness, for the annual payment of one penny from every house in the island to the pope, as the successor of St. Peter; which money was denominated Peter's pence.*

Notwithstanding this bull was issued in the year 1156, the insurrections and contested claims in his French provinces, the unsettled state of affairs in England, and, above all, his protracted dispute with Thomas à Becket, prevented the king from setting about the prosecution of his extraordinary mission; and it was not until subsequent occurrences gave him an opportunity, that he set about reducing to practice a matter to which he had been so long directing his attention. When Dermod Mac Murchad had been obliged to fly from his native country for the enormity of his offences, he had taken refuge in Bristol; and, after remaining some time in that city, he proceeded to Guienne, where Henry then was, to crave his assistance in restoring him to his principality; and offered, on that event, to hold his kingdom in vassalage under the crown of England. The English monarch, whose views had been already turned towards making acquisitions in Ireland, listened to his

* Vide Mat. Paris, p. 67. Spelman's Concilia, Vol. II., p. 51. Cambrens., *ut supra*.

statement with considerable courtesy; but being at that time embarrassed by the insurrections of his French subjects, as well as by his disputes with the clergy, he declined for the present embarking in the enterprise, and gave Dermod no further assistance than a letter of credence addressed to all his subjects, by which he empowered them to aid the king of Leinster in the recovery of his dominions.*

Elated by his favourable reception, Dermod returned to Bristol, and the letter of the English monarch was frequently read in that and the adjoining cities accompanied with the sound of a trumpet. But notwithstanding his magnificent promises, lavished on those who should enlist under his banners, and assist the friend and vassal of their sovereign, his efforts were attended with but little success. Having therefore spent a month at Bristol without being able to procure any assistance, Dermot was induced by the situation of affairs in South Wales to pay his court to some of the Norman chieftains in that country, hoping to engage them in his desperate enterprise.

Wales, to which the ancient Britons had retired from the fury of their Saxon oppressors, was, about the end of the sixth century, under the divided government of six princes, independent of each other, but acknowledging the supremacy of one of their number residing in North Wales. In process of time, however, the whole principality became united under one sovereign in the person of Roderic, surnamed the Great.† This prince, who consented to pay a regular tribute to the king of England, divided his

* Cambr., p. 760.

† Gard., Vol. I., p. 71.

dominions into three principalities, which were inherited by his three sons. Subsequent divisions with the civil commotions attendant upon them, gave an advantage to the kings of England; and, in 1063, the Welsh prince was reduced to a temporary vassalage, by Harold, who then commanded the forces of Edward the Confessor. More permanent inroads were afterwards made in the reign of William Rufus, when several of the Norman nobles obtained possessions in Wales, and acted with almost regal authority, under the title of the Lords of the Marches. In the beginning of the 12th century, a colony of Flemings had also been planted in the county of Pembroke, as an additional security to the English interest in that country. But, notwithstanding all these inroads made by the English upon the Welsh territories, the inhabitants of Wales had never been completely a conquered people. Unable to resist their more powerful neighbours, they sometimes submitted to pay tribute to the crown of England; but, whenever they found themselves in a condition to make any successful resistance, they did not scruple to take up arms in their own defence, and were sometimes able even to storm the Anglo-Norman castles, and to make ruinous incursions into the adjoining counties. The princes of North Wales continued to govern their native subjects, and, though generaliy obliged to acknowledge the supremacy of the kings of England, they kept their own courts, and acted as independent sovereigns in their own dominions.

About the time of Dermod's expulsion from Ireland, and his application for assistance to the English monarch, a revolt was in contemplation against Henry's authority in South Wales; and Rice ap Griffith, a chieftain who

commanded in the country about Pembroke, had imprisoned Robert Fitz-Stephen,* the governor of Cardigan, because he refused to join them in their intended revolt. Amongst those who were prepared to engage in any bold and hazardous undertaking, either at home or abroad, was Richard, earl of Strigul, commonly called Strongbow, upon account of his feats of archery; an influential young nobleman of dissipated manners and desperate fortune. To this chieftain, who was of the illustrious house of Clare, Dermod applied for assistance; and even went so far at last as to promise him his daughter Eva in marriage, and the reversion of his kingdom after his death, if by his means and the aid of his associates he should be restored to his dominions.† Though Strongbow treated the proposals of the Irish prince with apparent coldness at first, so tempting an offer made to a young nobleman who had impaired his fortune by expensive pleasures, was not to be resisted; and the Welshman at length entered deeply into all the schemes of the expatriated prince. A treaty was accordingly signed between them, and ratified by a solemn oath taken by both parties. But whatever right Dermod might have had to give his daughter in marriage to Strongbow,

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* "Very few of my readers can require to be informed, that the syllable *Fitz*, prefixed to the names of several South-British chieftains famous in Irish history, is a term of Norman French, corrupted from the Latin word *filius*, and signifiying *son*, as Fitzstephen implies the son of Stephen. Among the Welsh the particle *ap*, derived by the idiomatic pronunciation of that people from the Latin *ab*, has been applied to a similar use." *Gard.*, Vol. I., p. 77.

† Cambrens., p. 761.

his grant of his dominions after his death, was, according to the laws of Ireland, a mere nullity, since hereditary succession was not observed, the right of election being vested in the chiefs of the country, and none could be put in nomination for the crown of Leinster but a prince of the family of Cathair More.

By Strongbow's advice, Dermod next waited on Rice ap Griffith, in order to procure the enlargement of Fitz-stephen, whom the former considered a fit person to aid in the intended enterprise; and through the mediation of the bishop of St. David's, he obtained liberty from that chieftain for his prisoner to transport himself, with his friends and followers, to Ireland for the purpose of engaging in the service of the king of Leinster. To this man, and his maternal brother, Maurice Fitzgerald, he promised to give up the town of Wexford with two cantreds* of land adjoining, on condition of their support and assistance. Having thus far succeeded in his negociations and received solemn promises from Fitz-stephen and Fitzgerald of their sailing to his assistance in the ensuing spring, Dermod set sail for Ireland, with his own immediate followers and as many volunteers as he could collect on this occasion. Having landed privately on the Irish coast,

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* A cantred, century, or hundred, as it was called in England, was not a determinate measure of land, but varied in different places according to circumstances. According to the division afterwards made of Ireland, "Munster counted 70 cantreds, Leinster 31, Connaught 30, Ulster 35, and Meath 18. Each cantred had 30 townlands, every townland could feed 300 cows, and each townland contained 8 carucates or plough-lands." *Led., p.* 216.

he continued to pass unobserved to a monastery which he had founded at Ferns, where he remained some time in concealment, waiting the arrival of his transmarine allies. From this place of seclusion he gave notice to some of his most faithful adherents, that he had arrived with some forces, which were soon to be followed by a more considerable reinforcement, and he conjured them to repair immediately to his standard.*

Hated as he was by his subjects in general, he nevertheless mustered as many friends as enabled him to seize that part of his former dominions, known by the name of Hy-Kinselagh, but Roderic apprised of this audacious attempt, suddenly collecting some forces, with his faithful associate O'Ruark, marched into that country to reduce the bold and refractory prince.† Diffident of his own subjects, and knowing he was unable to cope with such an enemy, Dermod, after some slight skirmishing with his assailants, in order to gain time, had recourse to negociation, and made the most abject offers of submission to the monarch. He conjured him to interpose his good offices, to bring about a reconciliation between him and O'Ruark, whom he confessed he had greatly injured. That he was still making expiations for the horrid crime he had committed, as the unhappy lady had long since sought an asylum amongst the holy nuns of St. Bridget at Kildare, and hoped that he would not drive an unfortunate prince to indigence and despair, but allow him some small portion of the possessions of his ancestors to support

* Cambrens., *ut supra*, p. 761.

† Leland, B. I., Cap. I.

the remains of a miserable life."* Roderic, whose attention was called by more pressing circumstances to other parts of his dominions, listened to his proposals favourably, accepted his insidious submission, and, upon paying 100 ounces of pure gold to O'Ruark, as an *eric* for the injury he had done him, and delivering up seven hostages to the monarch for the fulfilment of his promises, Dermod was permitted to retain ten cantreds of the lands of Hy-Kinselagh, in vassalage under the monarch himself.

1169. Time, as well as a solid settlement at home, having been thus artfully gained, Dermod despatched Maurice O'Regan, his confidential secretary, into Wales, to remind his allies of their solemn engagements, to hasten their preparations, and to inform them that he was ready to receive them as soon as they could come to his assistance. Accordingly in the month of May, Fitzstephen, Fitzgerald, Barry, Hervey, and several other adventurers, landed near Wexford, with thirty knights, sixty esquires, and three hundred archers, who were next day joined by Maurice de Prendergast, at the head of ten knights and two hundred archers.

On the news of their arrival, numbers who had abandoned the party of the king of Leinster, returned to his standard; and that prince, whom neither oaths nor treaties could bind, hastened to join his allies as soon as he received the first intimation of their landing.† Under his natural son Donald, a youth of distinguished valour, he

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* O'Hal., Vol. III., p. 336.

† Their arrival was notified to him by letters dated May 11, 1169. See O'Hal.

sent forward five hundred men, whom he followed himself at the head of his infantry. The first enterprise planned, after the meeting of the two parties, was an attack upon the town of Wexford, about twelve miles distant from the place of debarkation. The contempt with which the garrison, composed of Irish and Danes, had been accustomed to treat the influence which Dermod possessed in raising a force sufficient to take their town by storm, induced them to think they were strong enough to disperse this troop of invaders in the field; and they accordingly marched some distance in order to give them battle. But when they saw an enemy quite different in number and discipline from that which they had expected they very prudently declined the engagement; but, being resolved to defend their city to the last extremity, they set fire to the suburbs and adjacent villages, and retired within the walls.

Encouraged by this retreat of the Irish, the leaders of the assailants instantly gave orders that a general assault should be made on the town; but they were opposed with such determination by the garrison that they were obliged to retire after having sustained the loss of some of the bravest of their men. Regardless, however, of the dejection of spirits occasioned amongst his allies by this repulse, and apprehensive that his followers might desert him and return to their own country, Fitz-stephen instantly retired to the sea, and set fire to all the ships in the harbour, in order that his men might perceive that they had no alternative for the future but conquest or death. After an inspiriting harangue, and the solemn ceremony of divine service, he again advanced to the assault; but for three successive days his efforts were attended with no better

success. At length the bishop and clergy of Wexford, the only order of men in Ireland with whom Dermod had any influence, persuaded the garrison to capitulate; and after much negociation between the two parties, the king of Leinster consented to accept their proposals. They accordingly renewed their oaths of fidelity to this prince, entered into his service, and put into his hands four of their principal burgesses as hostages for the faithful fulfilment of the promises they had made.

As soon as Dermod had possessed himself of the town of Wexford, according to his previous agreement, he made over the lordship of the city and its domain to Fitz-stephen and Fitz-gerald, though the latter had not arrived yet to his assistance; and on Hervey of Mountmorres, he bestowed two districts on the coast between the towns of Wexford and Waterford.*

The success of the allied forces in the reduction of the town of Wexford greatly increased the reputation of the king of Leinster; and numbers of the Lagenians began to resort to his standard, as the only means of saving themselves from the effects of his resentment. Having spent three weeks at Ferns, and received a considerable

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* "From this donation made to Hervey is commonly supposed to have originated the colonization of the Bargey and Forth baronies, where dwells a people distinct from their neighbours, particularly in a peculiar dialect of the Gothic language: but these are probably in part the descendants of ancient Belgians, known to the Roman geographers under the name of Menapii, intermixed in after ages with some Danes, or Norwegians, and on this occasion also with a great proportion of English colonists, and Flemings from Pembrokeshire." *Gard.* Vol. I., p. 82.

augmentation to his army, he resolved to take vengeance upon Mac-Gilla-Patrick, prince of Ossory, on whom part of his territories had been bestowed by the monarch. This chieftain had not only revolted from Dermod in his distress and associated with his enemies, but had formerly possessed himself of a son of the king of Leinster, as a hostage, and conceiving some suspicions of him as holding an unlawful intercourse with his wife, seized him in a fit of jealousy, and, with a cruelty not then peculiar to Ireland, ordered his eyes to be put out.* The unhappy youth expired under the operation; and the father harboured the most violent and implacable resentment, which he now resolved should burst forth with all its fury upon the devoted head of the prince of Ossory.

Stimulated by the hope of plunder, and willing to engage in any enterprise however nefarious or urgent, Dermod's allies expressed their willingness to engage in this expedition as soon as that prince had made the proposal; and, having collected all his forces, with a considerable body from Wexford, he marched toward the territories of the Ossorian dynast, but was obliged to encounter greater difficulties than he had experienced in storming the town of Wexford. The Ossorians, about 5,000 in number, occupying a most advantageous position amid woods and morasses, were able to repel the reiterated attacks of their assailants; and, after three days spent in constant skirmishing, the troops of the king of Leinster found that their utmost efforts were repeatedly foiled. Encouraged by their success, and transported by the ardour of victory, the

* See Leland., B. I., Cap. I.

Ossorians foolishly resolved to relinquish the place of security which they had hitherto occupied, and to attack the invaders in the open field; but being much inferior in number, they were soon obliged to give way, and Dermod granted unbounded liberty to his troops, to burn, plunder, and destroy the whole country without mercy. In the slaughter which ensued upon the rout of the Ossorians, it is said, that the Irish in the service of Dermod, brought three hundred heads of the slaughtered Ossorians and presented them to their prince; and that this royal barbarian, when he recognized amongst the number, the head of an inveterate enemy, seized the ghastly visage with his teeth, and mangled it in a paroxysm of rage and malignity! *

Satisfied with the present defeat of the Ossorians, and with the devastations committed amongst them, Dermod returned to Ferns without completing the conquest of that territory which he had intended to subdue. Meanwhile the success of the Lagenians and their allies became an alarming affair to the monarch. He perceived, that should Dermod be able to hold the kingdom of Leinster, without doing homage to him for the tenure of it, his own power as monarch of Ireland must thereby become very precarious. Donald O'Brien, also, who was king of Thomond and Ormond, was son-in-law to Dermod; and Roderick

* This account is given by Cambrensis and seems to be too horrid to gain credit or belief. "Surely," says Dr. Leland, "the humane and generous Britons could not have been witnesses of such an action!" But, though it is true that humanity and generosity have always been distinguishing characteristics of genuine Britons, yet the Irish adventurers were outcasts of Britain, and complete strangers to either of these virtues.

began to dread his power and to suspect his fidelity. Influenced by these considerations, though occupied elsewhere with a multiplicity of business, he judged an expedition, for the purpose of crushing the king of Leinster, absolutely necessary; and accordingly summoned a meeting of all his friends and tributaries at Tara, to take their advice in the present crisis of Irish affairs.* The result of this conference was, that messengers were sent to Fitz-stephen and his followers, to demand, "by what right or authority they presumed to invade this land in a hostile manner, or to display their banners in it; and ordering them to quit the country immediately, or to expect to be treated as pirates and robbers, who had taken up arms without the sanction of their lawful sovereign." The monarch also offered to furnish them with the means of transporting themselves to Wales; but the adventurers found themselves in no situation to embrace so humane and so generous a proposal. Fitz-stephen, their leader, had been liberated from prison, on the condition of his quitting his native country for ever; and, it is probable, that most of those who had embarked with him in his undertaking, were not in a much more respectable situation. Being therefore outcasts from society and reduced to a state of the most desperate extremity, they chose rather to persevere in their perilous enterprise in Ireland, and rejected every offer that was made them to return to their native land.

Meanwhile Roderic was making every preparation to give effectual resistance to the invaders, in case of their refusal;

* O'Con. Dissert, p. 264.

and having assembled a great body of troops at the hill of Tara, he marched with celerity towards the south. But, suspecting the fidelity of the northern chieftains, from their attachment to the Hy-Niall family, he was obliged to dismiss them and their followers, when he arrived at Dublin, pretending that the service was too insignificant to require the inconvenience of their longer detention.* The vast superiority, however, of his remaining forces, consisting of the troops of Connaught, Breffny, Thomond, and some lords of Leinster with their followers, struck terror into his enemies; and Dermod's troops being unable to encounter such a formidable force, retired from post to post, until they reached the fastnesses of the country about Ferns, which they strongly fortified, hoping to protract the war until they should receive further assistance from their friends in Wales.

Entrenched amidst morasses, precipices and woods, the king of Leinster waited the onset of the royal army with considerable coolness and perseverance. Roderic divided his forces into different detachments, appointed the troops that were to attack the different posts, and those that were to support them; and addressing them in an animating speech, he called upon them to march onwards to certain victory. The critical conjuncture of political wisdom, as well as of political safety, was now in his hands: but without improving the one, or giving the public any reasonable security for the other, he yielded to the weak counsels of some of the principal ecclesiastics of Leinster, and took hostages for the future fidelity of Dermod; a man whom no principle of

* Gard., Vol. I., p. 85.

religion, nor the of nature, could bind, and who had disturbed and tormented his country for thirty years together.* By the treaty into which the two parties entered, Dermod was to be acknowledged king of Leinster, and was to do homage to the monarch for his territories, as holding them in vassalage under him. He was to dismiss all the foreigners, with proper remuneration for their services, and to admit no more British adventurers into his country. The stipulations of this treaty were all ratified by oath before the great altar of the church of St. Maidag at Ferns; and Dermod delivered his son Art as a hostage into the hands of the monarch, for the faithful performance of all his engagements.

Conscious that he was universally detested by his own people, and apprehensive of falling a sacrifice to their resentment, Dermod willingly entered into this treaty, but had no intention of faithfully observing its stipulations. His principal object was to gain time; and as soon as the monarch had retired to his own domain, under various pretences, he delayed the fulfilment of his engagements. Encouraged, however, by the arrival of Maurice Fitzgerald, at Wexford, with ten knights, thirty esquires, and one hundred archers, he resolved to take vengeance upon the citizens of Dublin, who had treacherously murdered his father, and had buried the carcase of a dog with his body, as a mark of their hatred and contempt.† Dublin, at this time, was under a chieftain who sometimes acknowledged and sometimes disclaimed allegiance to the king of Leinster: it

* O'Con. Dis. 264.

† Cambrens., ut supra. Leland., B. I., Cap. I.

formed a distinct state, and possessed a territory consisting principally of what was called Fingal; and as soon as Dermod appeared before it, the citizens under the chieftain Hosculph-Mac-Torcal, terrified by his approach, agreed to give him hostages, and a considerable sum of money, which was probably the primary object of this expedition.

The success of the Lagenians and their confederates upon this occasion tended greatly to inflame the ambition of Dermod: and he began to meditate schemes of assuming the monarchy of the whole island. His son-in-law, Donald O'Brien, king of Thomond, perceiving with pleasure the errors which the monarch had committed, and hoping to extend his power and that of his house, at Roderic's expense, renounced his allegiance to the latter, and entered into a private treaty with Dermod, by which they engaged to support each other.* Animated by this accession to his power and influence, the king of Leinster, in order to complete the subversion of Roderic's authority, and to raise himself if possible to the sovereign throne, sent pressing letters to Strongbow urging the performance of his promises in the ensuing spring. Meanwhile Roderic, to punish the king of Thomond for his rebellion, invaded his territories; but the latter, having received assistance from his father-in-law under the command of Fitzstephen, was enabled to make a stand against the invaders, so that the monarch, called away by more pressing engagements, was obliged to relinquish his enterprise for the present.

While Dermod and his party in Ireland were actively engaged in strengthening themselves, Strongbow was using

* O'Hal., Vol. III., p. 344.

every exertion on the other side of the channel to raise as considerable a force as he was able for his intended expedition. But, fearing to embark in an undertaking of such moment without the particular license of his sovereign, he repaired to Henry to solicit this favour. Tired with his importunities, and perhaps unwilling that any extensive conquests should be made in Ireland except under his own immediate command, the English monarch at length contemptuously answered, "that he might go as far as his feet could carry him; nay, if he could get the wings of Dædalus, as far as he could fly." Strongbow, affecting to understand this equivocal and insulting reply as the requested permission, returned home and made preparations for the Irish expeditions; sending before him Raymond Le Gros, with ten knights and about one hundred archers, as his vanguard to announce to Dermod when he intended himself to land, that he might be ready to support him.

A.D. 1171. This band of adventurers, in the month of May 1171, landed about four miles from Waterford,* at a place called by the old historians Dondonolf, and immediately took possession of an old neglected fortress, which they repaired, and then sallied out on a predatory expedition. Having collected a great number of horned cattle from the adjoining district, they compelled the countrymen to drive them before them; but O'Felan, O'Ryan, and some of the principal citizens of Waterford, being joined by the neighbouring peasants, formed a tumultuary band of about three thousand men, and rushed with disorderly precipitation to retake the cattle and to punish the invaders. The

* Cambrens., p. 767.

Britons who at first despised such a mob of assailants, soon perceived that they were in imminent danger; and it was with some difficulty that a part of the guard succeeded in gaining the fortress and securing the cattle. The remainder of the fugitives, being closely pressed by their pursuers, were in a fair way of being cut off, when the gigantic Raymond, with great resolution sallied forth and slew with his own hand the leader of the hostile troops. During the state of irresolution which ensued on the part of the Irish, by the death of O'Ryan, Raymond, with great presence of mind, ordered the cattle to be driven against the assailants, whilst his troops made an instant sally and completed the disorder of their opponents. The wounded beasts rushed with impetuosity through the midst of the Irish, and all was instantly in confusion and dismay. Raymond and his troops gave them no time to form or rally. Some were slaughtered, others were drowned in the sea, and seventy of the principal citizens were captured, with whom the Britons marched back in triumph to their fortress. This victory, however, was tarnished by a deed of most deliberate and hardened cruelty. Raymond, it is said, immediately called a council of war, to decide upon the fate of the prisoners; and it was resolved that they should first have their legs broken, and then be precipitated into the sea; which was forthwith put into execution.*

The news of Strongbow's preparations having reached

* This cruelty, practised on the citizens of Waterford, was, "either, according to Regan, in revenge for a friend of Raymond's killed in the battle, or, according to Giraldus Cambrensis, at the instigation of Hervey of Mountmorres, to strike terror into the invaded people." *Gordon, Vol. I., p.* 89.

the king, that nobleman was surprised by a positive command from his sovereign, when he was just about to embark his troops at Milford, to desist from his intended enterprise, under the penalty of forfeiting his lands and honours, as a rebel against his king, and to return to court immediately to give an account of himself. But this adventurer had already gone too far, and the tenor of the message itself seemed too menacing to abide its consequences. Hoping, therefore, to evade or deprecate the resentment of the king, he weighed anchor, and in a few hours after, arrived in the bay of Waterford, on the 23rd of August, at the head of two hundred knights and twelve hundred archers. His arrival was attended by the king of Leinster and his British associates with their respective forces; and a council of war having been held, it was resolved to make an immediate attack upon the city of Waterford. Preparations were accordingly made to assault it the next day, as their critical situation rendered promptitude and dispatch absolutely necessary. But being twice repulsed by the intrepid bravery of the garrison, Raymond, who commanded as general in the siege, became very doubtful of the issue of the contest. Having, however, carefully examined all the walls and approaches to the town, he observed a house projecting beyond the wall in the eastern angle, the beams of the floor of which were lodged in the wall, and wooden posts fixed in the ground to support this airy mansion. Silently in the night, he had these supporters cut through, and, according to his anticipations, the house fell down with a violent crash, and drew with it such a portion of the wall as made a breach sufficiently practicable. A body of troops, therefore, prepared for the

purpose, rushed into the town with irresistible fury; and, traversing the walls in every direction, they slaughtered indiscriminately all they could meet. Proceeding next to the gates, they threw them open for the admission of their companions. The city was soon one scene of carnage and cruelty; and the licentious soldiers plundered, without any restraint, the inhabitants of the place.

Dead to every feeling of humanity, and regardless of the miseries which he had brought upon his unhappy countrymen, the relentless Dermod, as soon as the uproar of indiscriminate slaughter had subsided, sent an express to Ferns for his daughter Eva, had her stipulated nuptials with Strongbow solemnized in the city of Waterford, and the confederates marched immediately thence to Dublin, in order to chastise a supposed or real defection of its inhabitants.

Apprised of the movement of the enemy, the monarch was obliged for a time to relinquish his design upon Thomond, and to repair with precipitation to stop the progress of the invaders. He caused all the passes and defiles in the road towards Dublin to be fortified and manned, and the road itself to be broken up in several places, in order to retard the march of the hostile troops: but the invaders, taking a less frequented route than that which lay directly to the object of their expedition, crossed the mountains of Glendalogh, got the start of the royal army, and intrenched themselves near the walls of Dublin, before their adversaries were aware of the progress they had made. Defeated therefore in the object they had in view, the different chiefs that accompanied the monarch, demanded their dismissal, and returned home, leaving

Dublin, exposed to all the horrors of war and desolation.*

The citizens of Dublin, being previously aware that this attack of the enemy was intended, were making preparations for their own defence; but the chiefs of the confederates, who had suffered considerably from the obstinate valour of the inhabitants of Wexford and Waterford, wished to be in possession of Dublin upon easier terms than that effusion of blood which they now anticipated.† In the name of his master, the king of Leinster, therefore, O'Regan summoned the citizens to surrender, and promised to preserve their immunities, and to pass a general act of oblivion for all past offences. An accidental fire, which had destroyed one of their principal gates, rendered the citizens the more willing to embrace the proposals of their besiegers; and they sent a solemn deputation conducted by their archbishop, Laurence O'Toole, to enter into a treaty with the enemy. Numerous difficulties, however, notwithstanding his former proposals, were started by Dermod, in order to protract the negociation, whilst Raymond Le Gros and Milo de Cogan were carefully examining the walls of the city to find out the most likely place of assaulting it with success. Revenge being the primary object which the king of Leinster had in view, while he was amusing the deputies in the camp, and their fellow citizens were impatiently waiting their return, the two generals, pretending that the time for parley had expired, led their troops to the lowest and least defensible part of the walls, and effected an entrance before the

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* Leland. B. I., Cap. 2.

† O'Hal., Vol. III., p. 349.

inhabitants were aware of the treachery which had been practised upon them. The success of the besiegers was soon followed by the most unrestrained and licentious cruelty. The houses of the citizens, after having been plundered of everything valuable, were set on fire, and an indiscriminate slaughter of all the inhabitants ensued.

Whilst the city was thus one scene of blood and desolation, and whilst matrons and virgins were being violated in the presence of their expiring husbands and fathers, Dermod and Strongbow entered in triumph, and the latter was immediately invested with the lordship of Dublin. Committing the charge of the town to De Cogan, these two chieftains next marched into Meath; and, with a degree of cruelty to which it would be difficult to apply a suitable epithet, burned, despoiled, and wasted the country wherever they came.

Roderic, in the mean time, disabled by dissensions from giving effectual resistance to this invasion, sent a message to the king of Leinster, complaining of this breach of treaty, and threatening the death of his son, who was then held as a hostage by the monarch, if he did not immediately withdraw his troops and make compensation to O'Ruark for the devastations and murders committed in the country. But to this message he received an answer of defiance from Dermod, who, far from acknowledging himself the liegeman of O'Connor, declared he would not lay down his arms until he had subjugated all Ireland to his authority. Roderic, enraged with the insolence of this reply, took the only revenge which was then in his power, and immediately beheaded three of his hostages, among whom was young Art, the king of Leinster's own son.

Alarmed by the success of an enemy completely devoid of every principle of honour or humanity, a general council of the clergy was convened at Armagh to deliberate upon the state of public affairs; and, after a solemn deliberation, they came to the conclusion, that the calamities which had fallen on the Irish nation had originated in the sins of the people, and that Providence had brought on them the chastisement of the English arms, because of their still countenancing an unnatural traffic with England, which consisted in purchasing their children and relations as slaves. By the Anglo-Saxons, in earlier times, this abominable species of commerce had been carried on to such a degree as to sell any persons in their power, even their own children, to the merchants of the continent without any scruple:* but it is probable, as this barbarous custom had sunk before the benignant influence of Christianity, the number of slaves of that nation was but small at this period in Ireland. The immediate liberation, however, of all these and their restoration to their country and friends were decreed by this council as the most effectual means of averting the vengeance of Heaven, and procuring a deliverance from those calamities with which the Divine Being was now visiting the guilty land.

The fame of Dermod's exploits, assisted by his British associates, was soon wafted as far as Aquitain; and the English monarch heard, with a considerable degree of indignation and jealousy, that the king of Leinster, not content with the recovery of his own territories, had laid claim to the sovereignty of the whole Island, and that

* See Ling., Ant. of the Anglo-Saxon Church, p. 30.

Strongbow was declared presumptive heir to the crown of Leinster. Perceiving that the peace of his own dominions might be endangered if his subjects in Wales should be led to form too high an estimate of their own power and importance, he issued a proclamation, prohibiting the exportation of any supplies from England of men, arms, or provisions for Strongbow's troops, and commanding all his subjects delaying in Ireland to return home before the ensuing festival of Easter, under the penalty of the forfeiture of all their lands, and banishment for ever.*

This act of jealous power, which gave a mortifying and unexpected blow to the ambitious projects of Strongbow and his partisans, was quickly followed by the sickness and death of Dermod, their protector, in his capital of Ferns, where he ended his guilty career in a manner which rendered him an odious and offensive spectacle of misery. His body, it is said, became covered with fetid sores; he was attacked with morbus pedicularis; was deserted in his extremity by every friend; and expired without any spiritual comfort, in a state of horrible impenitence.

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* Cambrens., p. 770.

† O'Hal., Vol. III., p. 352.

CHAPTER XVI.

Proceedings of Strongbow, and Invasion by Henry II of England.

The death of this prince was followed by still more calamitous consequences to the cause of the adventurers, for it detached from their interest, Donald O'Brien, who presently made peace with the monarch; and, except a chief named Donald Kavanagh and a few others, most of their Irish allies followed his example. In this forlorn state of his affairs, Strongbow called together his most faithful friends, who resolved on the only expedient which sound sense could dictate. In order to conciliate the king of England, and to avert, if possible, the consequences of his displeasure, Raymond Le Gros was dispatched with a letter to Henry, in which the Welsh chieftain states, that he came into this land, as far as he could remember, with his majesty's leave and favour, to aid his servant Dermod Mac Murchad; that of what he had won by the sword he made a tender to him, and that he was his Majesty's "life and living."

The affairs of the English monarch, at the time this letter was presented to him, had been reduced to a very distressing situation. He had been engaged for some time in a vexatious and even perilous contest with Thomas à Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, who, encouraged and protected by the Roman pontiff, had violently opposed the Constitutions of Clarendon, a body of regulations which had been drawn

up in the year 1164, for the independence of the civil on the ecclesiastical authority. The insolence of this ambitious ecclesiastic, after a protracted contest, and ultimately a seeming accommodation, had forced some passionate exclamations of complaint from the king, in consequence of which the archbishop was assassinated in church, during the time of divine service, by four knights who had come to England for that purpose.* The report of this unfortunate event, which now threatened to bring all the thunders of the papal power to bear upon the king, had just arrived at his court in the south of France, while Raymond Le Gros was petitioning his Majesty in favour of Strongbow. This ambassador from the earl had presented his letter to Henry, but was received with marks of high displeasure, and after a long attendance, was obliged to return to Ireland without any answer. Besides the fears which the king entertained of the pope's resentment, he perceived that to accept the offers of Strongbow was to involve himself in a war with Ireland, and in the present juncture of affairs, the issue of this might be very precarious. He therefore resolved, for the present, to give no decided answer to Strongbow's letter, but to wait a more favourable opportunity of prosecuting his long-meditated designs against Ireland with more glory to himself and less obligation to the earl and his associates.

On the first arrival of the British adventurers, the archbishop of Dublin, a prelate highly esteemed for the dignity of his birth, as well as for his reputed piety, had endeavoured in vain to persuade the different chieftains to

* Hume's Hist. of Eng., Cap. VIII.

lay aside their factious disputes and to unite against their common enemy; and now the desperate condition of Strongbow's forces gave him another opportunity of renewing his exhortations to that effect. With a patriotic zeal for the interests of his country, and an inveterate hatred towards its invaders, he ran from tribe to tribe, and used every exertion in his power to rouse the different chieftains and their followers, and to convince them of the expediency of laying hold on the present opportunity of either exterminating or expelling the British invaders. By the exertions of this prelate, Roderic was once more enabled to appear in arms, at a time that seemed to give him peculiar advantages. The period set in Henry's proclamation had now elapsed; Strongbow and his adherents were proscribed in Britain; whilst their insatiable cupidity and unprecedented inhumanity had rendered them the objects of universal detestation in Ireland. The monarch, therefore, summoning his friends and allies to his standard, appeared at the head of a large army on the plains near Dublin, whilst a fleet of thirty Danish vessels blockaded the harbour to prevent any succours from being received by the garrison.

Meanwhile the British leaders within the city were not idle in making preparations to withstand the assault of the Irish; they called in their outposts, and drained their other garrisons to strengthen that of Dublin. But having been surrounded by a host of enemies for two months, and oppressed by famine and disease, they at length saw their affairs coming speedily to a crisis, and their dejection was increased by intelligence that Fitz-stephen was besieged in the fortress of Carrick by the men of Wexford, and, if not relieved before the end of three days, must inevitably

fall into the hands of his enemies. In this distressed situation, Strongbow called a council of war to deliberate on what should be done, and it was unanimously agreed that proposals should be made to the Irish monarch, through the archbishop of Dublin, who at that time commanded a body of troops in the Irish army, signifying their wish that Strongbow should acknowledge him as their sovereign and hold the kingdom of Leinster in vassalage under him. But when the proposals of the besieged were formally discussed, they were found inadmissible. Another prince had been elected to the provincial throne, of the race of Cathair More; and those chiefs whose territories had been unlawfully usurped, now put forward their claims that they should be restored to their respective governments. The only terms which the Irish were willing to grant the besieged were, that as soon as they should make a peaceable surrender of the city of Dublin, with the ports of Waterford, Wexford, and other strongholds, they should be provided with transports to convey themselves and their effects to their own country, without the least hurt or injury: but, if they should not comply with this requisition, that a general assault should be made, and the garrison put to the sword.*

On the return of the archbishop with this answer, which was probably made so favourable through his intercession, the besieged were at once aware of the critical position in which they now stood. They had been proclaimed traitors already in Britain; and their own sovereign had not only rejected the offers they made him, but had given them up

* O'Hal., V. III., p. 355.

as a people devoted to certain destruction. In this situation they came to a resolution worthy of gallant men who had no alternative but death or victory. Milo de Cogan declared that he would rather die in battle than deliver himself into the hands of a cruel and vindictive foe; and Maurice Fitz-gerald, whose wife and children had been left with Fitz-stephen in the fortress of Carrick, made an animated speech, in which he avowed his determination to act in a similar manner.

The spirit of these warriors was quickly caught by the whole assembly; and they agreed unanimously to make a desperate sally on the following day, and to fall on the monarch's own quarters, which, they naturally supposed, would be left carelessly guarded while this negociation was being carried on. The archbishop was in their hands; and whilst that prelate, as well as the troops of the Irish monarch, imagined they were deliberating on the message that had been brought them, they were all busily engaged in arming for the sortie. Before day-light they attacked the monarch's quarters; and such was the consternation into which the besiegers were thrown, that they concluded the garrison had received a large reinforcement from England, whilst their surprise and fear induced them to magnify the danger. Everything was instantly thrown into confusion; and Roderic himself, who was just preparing for a bath, was obliged half-naked to join his flying troops, the whole of his forces having been driven from their ground with terrible slaughter at the very first onset.

Actuated by no sense of a common interest, and influenced by no attachment to their sovereign or friendship for each other, the Irish princes who had accompanied the

monarch and occupied different posts around the city, as soon as they perceived the rout of the Connaught forces, broke up their camps and fled to their respective territories, leaving behind them, besides other spoils, a sufficient quantity of provisions to support the garrison for a whole year. Nor was this the only advantage gained by the rout of the royal forces; for as soon as the Danish fleet perceived that their stay any longer would be perfectly useless, they returned home and left the sea as well as the land, open to the adventurers.

Whilst the desperate state of Strongbow's affairs, and the inevitable ruin which then menaced himself and his followers, were the very means of his triumphant success, the defenders of Carrick, were by a different line of conduct brought to destruction. The ruins of this little fortress, which was founded on a rock, are still to be seen about two miles above Wexford, on the eastern bank of the river Slaney. Fenced on all sides naturally by precipices and a deep stream, it was at this time furnished with a slender garrison, as Fitz-stephen had sent a considerable part of his men for the defence of his associates in the city of Dublin. Repulsed, however, by this little band that remained, the assailants found themselves unable to take the fortress expect by stratagem: and in their ardour for the reduction of this stronghold of the enemy, they employed an artifice, dishonourable to their memory, by which they got Fitz-stephen into their hands, whom they loaded with chains, whilst they so inhumanly tortured and maimed his followers, that most of them expired under the violence of their sufferings.

On the rout of Roderic's forces at Dublin, Strongbow,

who marched instantly for the relief of Carrick, was placed in imminent danger by an ambuscade which was laid for him, in a territory called at that time Hy-Drone, in the modern county of Carlow. But having defeated his assailants and advanced towards Wexford, he had the mortification of hearing that Fitz-stephen was in the hands of his enemies, and that affairs were reduced to such a situation as rendered his relief at present impracticable. Having heard of the approach of Strongbow's forces, and apprehensive of the effects of their rage and resentment, the men of Wexford, after setting fire to their town, had retired with their surviving prisoners to a small island in the harbour called Holy Island, whence they sent a message to Strongbow, declaring, if he should offer them any hostility in that place, they would instantly put every one of their prisoners to death. Influenced by this menace, and dreading that it would be carried into immediate effect, Strongbow relinquished his designs upon the people of Wexford; and having marched to Waterford, where he transacted some business, he returned in a short time to Ferns, the regal seat of the Lagenian princes.

Meanwhile the kingdom had been broken into factions on the dispersion of the monarch's forces at Dublin; and by his irresolute and temporising spirit Roderic had lost the confidence of the people. Donald O'Brien, who had deserted the cause of the adventurers, again renounced the monarch's authority, and entered into a fresh treaty with Strongbow. Still it is reasonable to suppose, that the latter would gladly have sacrificed much to be admitted to the favour of his own sovereign; and it is probable he continued to make new overtures for that purpose. But Henry

had his own objects in view; and as soon as these could be safely accomplished, he was resolved to avail himself of the assistance of this nobleman to bring about the ambitious designs which he was meditating against Ireland.

While Strongbow was regulating his affairs at Ferns, and punishing his enemies among the toparchs of Leinster, he received a summons from Henry, commanding him to appear immediately before him. The vigilance and abilities of this talented monarch had warded off the blow that was levelled at him by his enemies in the papal court; and at length, having found leisure to embark in his meditated project against Ireland, he had arrived in his own dominions; and to confirm his disavowal of the earl's proceedings, had issued this summons for Strongbow's appearance.

Strongbow, fearing to persevere in his obstinacy, and dreading the king's resentment, after having appointed governors to the several garrisons that were in his possession, repaired instantly to England, and waited on the king at Newnham, near Gloucester. Here he made a full surrender to his sovereign of all his maritime fortresses, with a territory about Dublin; and, through the influence of Hervey of Mountmorres, he was restored to the royal favour as well as to his estates in England and Normandy, and declared steward of Ireland.*

Whatever dislike or hostility the king might have conceived towards this nobleman, it was his interest to soothe and flatter him, and it was equally incumbent on the latter to seem persuaded of his good intentions. From the information which Henry received in those conferences which

* (O'Hal. Vol. III., p. 357.)

he held with the earl about the reduction of Ireland, he had no doubt about the ultimate success of his project, and Strongbow was permitted to retain in perpetuity under Henry and his heirs all his Irish possessions, except those which he had already surrendered to the king.

The preparations which the English monarch was making during the whole of the summer for the invasion of Ireland were well known in that country; but such was the infatuation of the inhabitants that no attempt was made upon their part to oppose his landing, or even to retake those cities which had fallen into the hands of the adventurers.

A fruitless attempt had indeed been made on the city of Dublin by O'Ruark of Breffny, but he had been repelled by Milo de Cogan, the governor, with the loss of many on both sides, including a son of O'Ruark's, who fell in the conflict.*

Nothing can account for this apathy of the Irish people, but the unhappy condition to which the political state of their country had been reduced by the collision of factious chieftains. It was not for want of courage in the natives that the Britons had been hitherto so successful in this country, but for want of that union which would have forced the latter to contend with the power of the nation. For, however the historian may speak of Ireland at this time as one collected state, it is obvious the inhabitants had but faint ideas of a national cause or a national force.† Their different septs were respectively zealous for their own interest or the honour of their own arms; but little

* Leland, B. I., C. 2.

† Leland, B. I., Cap. I.

concerned about the fortune of a distant province, and little affected by the disgrace or defeat of any chieftain but their own. Roderic had lost the confidence of his people, as he had been obliged, by want of union amongst his subjects, to let slip several opportunities of annihilating his enemies; and the Irish chieftains in general, unconscious of a common interest, regarded with indifference, perhaps, with malignant pleasure, the approaching downfall of their nominal sovereign. Those from whom the nation had reason to look for protection, confining their hopes and fears to their own local concerns, had publicly betrayed its cause.

The two Munsters after having renounced the authority of Roderic, had entered into a treaty with Strongbow; and, as the sequel would seem to prove, were privately encouraging the designs of the English monarch, since Mac Carthy and O'Brien were among the first to render him homage immediately after his landing. The men of Wexford, conscious of their own former perfidy in securing the fortress of Carrick, and dreading the resentment of their enemies when they should arrive under more favourable circumstances, had sent a message to Henry before his embarkation for Ireland, tendering their allegiance to him as their sovereign, and complaining of the conduct of Fitz-stephen, whom they had taken, they said, in arms as a traitor to his king, and had reserved for his majesty's own judgment and disposal.

Henry, though sensible of the insincerity of all these professions, with that policy for which he was ever distinguished, commended highly the conduct of the Wexfordians, and assured them that this chieftain, as well as the rest of his offending subjects, should be brought to punishment and suffer the due reward of his crimes. Having therefore

made every necessary preparation, the king, accompained by Strongbow, proceeded through South Wales to Pembroke, and after performing his devotions in the Church of St. David's, and imploring the divine blessing on his arms employed under the authority, and in the cause of the Church, he embarked at Milford Haven, and in a few hours entered the harbour of Waterford.*

This fleet, consisting of two hundred and forty ships, and conveying an army of 400 knights, and about 4000 inferior soldiers, was a formidable object to those on whose coast it appeared; and as no previous preparation had been made to oppose his landing, any resistance now on the part of the natives would have been not only unsuccessful, but the means of exposing them to the resentment of a powerful and dangerous foe. The ostensible purpose for which Henry paid this visit to Ireland, being not to conquer, but to take possession of a kingdom that was his by a grant of the sovereign pontiff, he affected to believe that his sovereign authority could not be disputed but ought to be acknowledged and obeyed without the least difficulty or reluctance. Amidst the acclamations of joy at the arrival of this new sovereign, with his splendid train of Norman barons, Strongbow made a formal surrender of the city of Waterford, and did homage to Henry for the principality of Leinster.† Here, also, the men of Wexford, as an indication of their extraordinary zeal in his cause, waited on his majesty, and produced Fitz-Stephen, their prisoner, whom the king with a stern rebuke remanded to prison,

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* Art. 18. 1172.

† Cambrens., p. 775.

as if intending to inflict a severer punishment on him when he should be more at leisure to take his particular case into consideration.

Meanwhile the southern chieftains who, probably, from disgust with their own monarch, had secretly encouraged the invasion, came emulously forward to make their submission to their new sovereign. The very next day after his landing, Dermod Mac Carthy, the prince of Desmond, presented him the keys of his capital city of Cork and rendered him homage as monarch of Ireland. Having remained for a few days in Waterford, Henry next proceeded with his army to Lismore, where he rested for two days and gave orders for the erection of a fort, and then proceeded to Cashel; at which city, Donald O'Brien, prince of Thomond, waited on him, tendered him the keys of the city of Limerick, and did him homage for his other territories. The example of these princes of North and South Munster was soon after followed by Fitzpatrick, prince of Ossory, O'Felan, chief of the Deasies, and other inferior toparchs of Munster. Thence he marched to Wexford, and, as it was now no longer necessary to keep up the appearance of resentment towards Fitz-stephen, he premitted his barons to intercede for him as a brave subject, who had not willingly or intentionally offended, for whose fidelity they were all ready to become sureties, and who was himself prepared to give the best security for his allegiance, by a formal resignation of all his Irish possessions to his sovereign. Having therefore received from that chieftain a surrender of the town of Wexford and its territory, the king not only set him at liberty, but granted him the investiture of all his other possessions.

Having provided for the security of Munster, and placed

garrisons in the cities of Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Wexford, Henry next resolved to proceed to Dublin to take formal possession of this city which had been already surrendered by Strongbow. To strike the inhabitants with the splendour and magnificence of his army, as well as to give their chieftains an opportunity of repairing to his camp, and of acknowledging his sovereignty, he led his forces through the district of Ossory in a slow and stately procession. In the course of his progress, the great lords and chieftains of Leinster acknowledged themselves in due form his vassals. Even O' Ruark of Breffny, hitherto the determined enemy of the English and the steady and unwavering friend of O' Connor, was carried away by the general defection, and tendered his submission with the rest of his compatriots. The indifference of these chieftains to the interests of their native monarch, which had increased with his declining fortune, had, no doubt, to an extensive degree contributed to produce this effect: but the appearance of a formidable army hovering about the districts of each petty toparch, when each was left to his own resources for defence, was a still more powerful stimulus, to quicken the resolutions they had already formed, and to induce them to submit to the authority of the invader.

Harassed by the factions of his own hereditary province, and afflicted by the unatural dissensions of his sons, Roderic O' Connor beheld with grief and indignation, though not with dismay, the defection of his tributaries and the formidable progress of the English monarch. But resolving that his own territory at least should not be sacrificed to the ambition of the invader, he collected his provincial troops, and entrenched himself upon the banks of the

Shannon, where he encouraged himself with a hope of being able to withstand any onset of the enemy. As his reduction, however, was a matter of prime importance to Henry, while he was preparing a splendid entertainment for those Irish chieftains who had become his vassals, he dispatched Hugh de Lacy and William Fitzandelm, with a body of troops against Roderic, in order either to persuade or force him to a submission. But all the efforts of these two experienced warriors proved unsuccessful in accomplishing the object of their mission.*

Roderic, with his Conacian followers, having chosen his ground with considerable judgment, had begun to act in a spirit and with a dignity more suitable to his station, and could neither be forced into submission, nor attacked by the invader with any hopes of success.

Henry, being thus compelled to relinquish for the present his designs against his western rival, according to his stipulations with the pope, next turned his attention to ecclesiastical affairs. He summoned at Cashel, a general

* Giraldus indeed asserts that Roderic yielded at the instance of De Lacy and Fitzandelm, swore allegiance to Henry, and gave hostages as a security for the faithful payment of his tribute. But the Irish annalists acknowledged no such submission; and the abbot of Peterborough declares ingenuously that the King of Connaught still continued to maintain his independence, agreeing in this with the artless historical strictures of Ireland, which distinctly mark the extent of Henry's present acquisitions, without the least appearance of disguise or partiality, and represent their monarch as still exercising an independent sovereignty, opposing the invaders, and at length treating with Henry at the time and in the manner stated on record.—*Leland*, Vol. I., p. 72.

assembly of the clergy of Ireland, or at least of that part that had submitted to his authority, and there exhibited the bull of Pope Adrian by which the sovereignty of this island was transferred from all the branches of Irish royalty to an entire stranger, for the good of the Church and the complete eradication of vice and corruption. In this synod, which was numerously attended by the clergy of Leinster and Munster, Christian, bishop of Lismore presided as the pope's legate; and it was also attended by the lords who had submitted themselves to the English monarch; but was not sanctioned by Gelasius, the primate, nor by a considerable portion of the Irish ecclesiastics. The bull of Pope Adrian having been produced was then read, and was to the following effect:—

"*Adrian, bishop and servant of the servants of God, to his most dear son in Christ, the illustrious king of England, greeting; health, and apostolical benediction.*"

"Thy greatness, as is becoming a Catholic prince, is laudably and successfully employed, in thought and intention, to propagate a glorious name upon earth, and lay up in heaven the rewards of a happy eternity, by extending the boundaries of the church, and making known to nations which are uninstructed, and still ignorant of the Christian faith, its truths and doctrine, by rooting up the seeds of vice from the land of the Lord: and to perform this more efficaciously, thou seekest the counsel and protection of the apostolical see, in which undertaking, the more exalted thy design will be, united with prudence, the more propitious, we trust, will be thy progress under a benign Providence,

since a happy issue and end are always the result of what has been undertaken from an ardour of faith, and a love of religion.

"It is not, indeed, to be doubted, that the kingdom of Ireland, and every island upon which Christ the sun of righteousness hath shone, and which have received the principles of the Christian faith, belong of right to St. Peter, and to the holy Roman Church, (which thy majesty likewise admits,) from whence we the more fully implant in them the seed of faith, that seed which is acceptable to God, and to which we, after a minute investigation, consider that a conformity should be required by us the more rigidly. Thou, dearest son in Christ, hast likewise signified to us, that for the purpose of subjecting the people of Ireland to laws, and eradicating vice from among them, thou art desirous of entering that island; and also of paying for each house an annual tribute of one penny to St. Peter; and of preserving the privileges of its churches pure and undefiled. We, therefore, with approving and favourable views commend thy pious and laudable desire, and to aid thy undertaking, we give to thy petition our grateful and willing consent, that for the extending the boundaries of the church, the restraining the prevalence of vice, the improvement of morals, the implanting of virtue, and propagation of the Christian religion, thou enter that island, and pursue those things which shall tend to the honour of God, and salvation of his people; and that they may receive thee with honour, and revere thee as their lord: the privilege of their churches continuing pure and unrestrained, and the annual tribute of one penny from each house remaining secure to St. Peter, and the holy Roman

Church. If thou, therefore, deem what thou hast projected in mind possible to be completed, study to instil good morals into that people, and act so that thou thyself, and such persons as thou wilt judge competent, from their faith, words, and actions, to be instrumental in advancing the honour of the Irish Church, propagate and promote religion, and the faith of Christ, to advance thereby the honour of God, and salvation of souls, that thou mayest merit an everlasting reward of nappiness hereafter, and establish on earth a name of glory, which shall last for ages to come. Given at Rome, &c."

This bull so unfounded in its charges against the Irish Church, has been justly the subject of much animadversion, even by those writers who are willing to acknowledge the spirtual supremacy of the Roman pontiff. They have given an enumeration of those eminent prelates and other ecclesiastics in Ireland who distinguished themselves in this very age for their piety and learning; but as one of them has justly remarked, "it would have been better for the nation had they been able to mention a Brian, a Kennedy, or a Ceallachan, who, with the sword, would have at once cut through the fascination!"* But the time of Ireland's military glory had passed away; and through the intrigues of an artful monarch and the insolent assumption of a foreign ecclesiastic, she was now, and for ages afterwards, doomed to suffer those calamities, which formed the most prominent feature in her subsequent history.

The injustice of the charges contained in this bull, and

* O'Hal.

their glaring inapplicability to the Irish Church, have induced some of the zealous advocates for the honour of the papacy, to call in question its authenticity, and to suppose it impossible that it could have proceeded from the apostolic see. But how unjust soever this papal document may appear to the world, we have the most irrefragable proofs that it could not have been a forgery. The following confirmation of it by Pope Alexander III, which was published in the lifetime of that pontiff by Cambrensis, is of itself sufficient evidence upon this subject.

"*Alexander, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to his most dear son in Christ, the illustrious king of England, health and apostolical benediction.*

"Forasmuch as those things which are known to have been reasonably granted by our predecessors, deserve to be confirmed in lasting stability, we, adhering to the footsteps of Pope Adrian, and regarding the result of our gift to you, (the annual tax of one penny from each house being secured to St. Peter and the holy Roman Church,) confirm and ratify the same, considering that its impurities being cleansed, that barbarous nation which bears the name of Christian, may, by your grace, assume the comeliness of morality; and that a system of discipline being introduced into her heretofore unregulated church, she may, through you, effectually attain, with the name, the benefits of Christianity."

Through the powerful influence of the various engines which were now at work, the bull of the pontiff was received by the Synod, and the sovereignty of Ireland was

conferred on the English monarch and his heirs for ever, by the reverend fathers composing this assembly. The reformation of the Irish Church was next discussed; and eight canons or ordinances passed for the purpose of carrying into effect the pious intentions of the king! 1. That the people should not marry within the prohibited degrees of affinity or consanguinity. 2. That children should be catechised outside the church door, and infants baptised at the font. 3. That tithes of cattle and corn should be paid to the church. 4. That church lands and all ecclesiastical property should be exempt from secular exactions. 5. That the clergy should be released from *eric*, or retribution, on account of murder or other crimes, committed by their relations. 6. That all true sons of the church should have power by will to distribute their effects in due proportion between their wives and children. 7. That Christians when dead should be brought to the church, and decently interred in hallowed ground; and 8. That divine service in the Church of Ireland should for the future be in all things conformable to that of the Church of England. "For it is meet and just," says Ambrensis, who has given us an account of this synod, "that as Ireland has by Providence received a lord and king from England, so she may receive from the same a better form of living. For to his royal grandeur are both the church and realm of Ireland indebted for whatever they have hitherto obtained, either of the benefits of peace, or the increase of religion. Since, before his coming into Ireland, evils of various kinds had from old times gradually overspread the nation, which by his power and goodness are now abolished."

These regulations, the greater part of which are set down for mere parade, having been adopted by the council, the great object of Henry's mission was accomplished, at least as far as the church was concerned: but the civil subjection of this island to the crown of England was far from being attained. The king of England, by the public submissions of the princes of Munster, Leinster, Ossory, and the Deasies, as well as through the influence of the clergy of their respectives territories, became sovereign of Leath-Mogha, or the southern half of Ireland; but still Roderic O'Connor, and O'Nial, the powerful dynast of the north, were as much as ever his open and avowed enemies. His stay in Ireland was for several months, during which time nothing remarkable happened, except the submission of the princes of the south, and a fatal plague which followed soon after, by which thousands perished.*

But whilst meditating plans for securing and extending his conquests as soon as the season would permit, Henry was informed at Wexford, that Albert and Theodine, two cardinals, who had been sent by the pope to inquire into the causes of the murder of the Archbishop of Canterbury, were long expecting his arrival in Normandy, and had summoned him to appear before them under pain of excommunication and of an interdict on his dominions. The earlier arrival of this alarming piece of intelligence had been prevented by a tempestuous winter; and being sensible of the danger to which he would be exposed by the acts of spiritual power, he embarked at the festival of Easter, 1173, and having made some arrangements for the admin-

* O'Hal. 377.

istration of affairs in his absence from Wexford, arrived in Pembrokeshire, and set out for Normandy with all the precipitation which his circumstances required.

The people of Ireland after this period became severally subject to two very different forms of government. The British colonists, placed in the same political situation with their fellow-subjects in England, were governed by English laws; whilst the condition of the Irish princes who had submitted to a new sovereignty, underwent no change, but by their professing allegiance to the king of England instead of their own sovereign. Their ancient Brehon jurisprudence was as much in force as ever; and whilst they continued to observe their ancient customs and modes of succession, they acted as independent potentates in waging war with each other, and entering into their usual alliances offensive and defensive. Of the territories acquired by himself and his British subjects in Ireland, and which when afterwards enlarged and divided into counties were denominated the *English pale*, Henry reserved, as his own immediate property, the maritime towns, and some districts. The rest of the surrendered lands he divided amongst the leaders of his troops, which they were to possess in military tenure as feudal right, being bound, not only to do homage to their sovereign for their respective holdings, and to pay him tribute, but to support a certain number of knights and inferior soldiers for his service. These leaders, who, in every other respect, were absolute and hereditary lords and princes in their respective territories, parcelled out their lands in like manner to certain knights or gentlemen, who, instead of rent, gave military service, each furnishing, when required,

a number of soldiers in proportion to the quantity of land he possessed.

Henry, while in Ireland, amongst his other acts of regal authority, granted the city of Dublin, by a charter, to the citizens of Bristol with the same privileges as those which they enjoyed at home.* In like manner the city of Waterford was granted to the Ostmen or Danes, where they were to enjoy all the rights of English subjects, and all the advantages of the laws of England. By a statute enacted by the king in council, in order to make a provision for the uninterrupted administration of affairs in his absence, the chancellor, treasurer, chief justices, chief baron, keeper of the rolls, and the king's sergeant at law, were empowered to elect, with the consent of the nobles of the land, a successor to the chief governor in case of his death, vested with the full authority of the king's vicegerent, until the royal pleasure should in that particular be notified. The office of chief governor was conferred on Hugh de Lacy, who had Robert Fitzstephen and Maurice Fitzgerald appointed as his coadjutors. The territory of Meath, already in possession of English troops, was granted to De Lacy: and to John de Courcey, an adventurous baron, the whole province of Ulster was assigned, provided he should be able to subjugate the Ultonians, and take possession of their lands.

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* See Leland, Book I, Cap. 3, with the authorities he cites.

CHAPTER XVII.

Events subsequent to Henry's personal Invasion of Ireland till the time of his Death.

On Henry's departure from Ireland, it was soon found, that he had not left behind him in this country one true subject more than he had found in it at his first arrival.* The unsettled state in which he had been obliged to leave his Irish acquisitions, began to appear in a short time after his departure from that country. Strongbow having marched into Ofally to enforce the payment of his tribute from a toparch named O'Dempsy, was attacked by the natives while returning, and his rear-guard obliged to sustain a furious assault, with the loss of some men, particularly Robert de Quiny, his standard-bearer and son-in-law. O'Ruark of Breffny was killed on the hill of Tara, with many of his followers, where he had met Hugh de Lacy in conference, in order to settle some disputes, and had, according to the account of English writers, prepared an ambuscade for the destruction of the chief governor, which was prevented by prudent precautions, but, according to that of the Irish, he fell by the treachery and blood-thirsty disposition of the foreigners. Besides these petty hostilities, almost all the native chieftains who had sworn allegiance to the English monarch rose in arms, and encouraged by

* See Sir John Davis' Discovery of the causes why Ireland was never entirely subdued until the beginning of the reign of James the First.

the embarrassments of the king elsewhere, raised various insurrections in different parts of the country.

Henry, to whose crown a numerous progeny of sons and daughters had given both lustre and authority, had evinced an imprudent but affectionate zeal in giving splendid establishments to the several branches of his family, but his paternal kindness met with an ungrateful return from his sons. He had appointed Henry, the eldest, to be his successor in the kingdom of England, granting him the duchy of Normandy, and the counties of Anjou, Maine, and Touraine: to Richard, his second son, he had assigned the duchy of Guienne and county of Poictou: Geoffry, his third son, inherited, in right of his wife, the duchy of Britanny: and the new conquest of Ireland was destined for the appanage of John, his fourth son.* In order to insure the succession to his eldest son, this monarch had made him his associate in the throne by a solemn coronation: but the young prince being afterwards allowed to pay a visit to his father-in-law, Lewis the seventh of France, that crafty and imperious monarch persuaded him that he had a right to the immediate enjoyment of sovereign power, by virtue of the royal unction which he had received; and that his father could not, without injustice, exclude him from the immediate possession of the whole, or, at least, a part of his dominions.† In consequence of these extravagant ideas, when the English monarch refused to accede to the wishes of the young prince, the latter attempted to enforce his unrighteous claims by an appeal to the

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* Hume. Hist. Cap. IX.

† Cambrens, p. 782.

sword; and in this unnatural rebellion he was assisted by his brothers, who also claimed the immediate possession of the territories assigned them. In the dangerous war thus excited against the king, the alacrity with which Strongbow fled to his assistance in Normandy, gained the confidence of that monarch to such a degree that he appointed him chief governor of Ireland, and sent him back with discretionary powers for the management of the turbulent affairs of that country.

1174. On his arrival in Ireland, Strongbow found the army, which had been entrusted to the command of Hervey of Mountmorres, so mutinous and discontented with their leader, that he was obliged to transfer the supreme military authority to Raymond le Gros, who began immediately to act with vigour, notwithstanding the great diminution of his forces, by the assistance which the new chief governor was obliged to render his royal master in other parts of his dominions. Having ravaged Ofally and Lismore, Raymond marched back along the coast to Waterford, conveying his booty in some vessels which he had found at anchor; and though he was attacked in his progress both by sea and land, he was victorious on both elements. Acquainted with his proceedings, and encouraged by a contrary wind which prevailed for some time, the men of Cork, resolved if possible to destroy his transports, and to wreak their vengeance on his followers towards whom they entertained the most inveterate hostility. The king's necessities had obliged him to withdraw the English garrison from the city of Cork; which, upon its evacuation, had been re-occupied by MacCarthy; and now the inhabitants, in order to evince their zeal in the cause of their native

chieftain, hastily fitted out thirty barks, and fell with the utmost fury on the English transports, which had not yet weighed anchor. This sudden and unexpected assault was, however, sustained with considerable intrepidity; and such was the success of the English on this occasion that they took eight vessels from the enemy, and sailed in triumph to their place of destination. Raymond, apprised of this attempt to destroy his little fleet, was hastening to their assistance, when he found himself suddenly encountered by the forces of the prince of Desmond, but succeeded in putting the followers of that chieftain to a shameful flight.

Elated by their success in these trivial engagements, the British soldiers were confirmed in the high opinion they had formed of their new leader: but Raymond being disgusted by Strongbow's refusal to give him his sister Basilia in marriage, resigned the command of the troops in Ireland, and retired into Wales, leaving them to be conducted by their former general.

Sensible of the obscurity into which his own character had been thrown by the superior lustre of his rival, Hervey now resolved by some brilliant exploits to signalize himself as a military leader, and to emulate the successes of his predecessor in command. He represented to the chief governor the necessity of directing all his energies against that spirit of insubordination which had been evinced by the princes of Munster; and urged that, by chastising their revolt as well as by reducing them to obedience, he might strike terror into those who were disaffected, but had not dared to commence hostilities. These plausible representations had the desired effect upon the mind of the chief governor whose genius was better fitted to adopt and execute

the project of others than to form new plans of operation for himself. In conjunction with Mountmorres he led a considerable body of forces to the city of Cashel, where they reviewed their troops, and received information of the general state of the enemies with whom they had to contend.* But either diffident of their own forces, or wishing to give their armament a more brilliant and formidable appearance, they dispatched orders to Dublin, for a considerable party of the garrison, consisting of Ostmen who had engaged in the service of the English, to gain their main body without delay. O'Brien of Thomond, apprised of the advance of this detachment, and implacably hostile to the invaders of his country, resolved to intercept them in their march, and by cutting them off, to give a severe and disheartening blow to the sanguine expectations of the enemy. He permitted the Ostmen to advance as far as Thurles, and there to encamp in a state of careless security; but falling suddenly upon them, he routed the whole detachment, and left their four principal commanders, with about four hundred of their men dead upon the field.

To complete the triumph of the Momonian chieftain, as soon as Strongbow received the intelligence of this misfortune, he retreated with all the precipitation of a defeated general, and was obliged to throw himself into Waterford, as a place of security from the rage of his enemies. The report of this misfortune was quickly spread throughout the country; † the Irish chieftains rose everywhere

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* Leland. B. I., Cap 4.

† "The Irish annalists assure us, that on the report of Strongbow's march into Munster, Roderic advanced with an

in arms: and even those who had lately made their submissions, and bound themselves to the service of the English monarch, now openly disclaimed all their former engagements. Donald Kavanagh himself, a son of the late Dermod Mac Murchad, and a chieftain who had hitherto faithfully adhered to the cause of the invaders, now asserted his title to the kingdom of Leinster, and deserted the interests of his former allies; whilst Roderic O'Connor, embracing the favourable opportunity, used every exertion to unite the princes of Ulster, the native chieftains of Meath, and other toparchs, against the common enemy of their country.

Perceiving the error into which he had fallen by offending Le Gros, and sensible of the loss he had sustained by the resignation of that chieftain, Strongbow, without the least hesitation or delay, sent into Wales, entreating Raymond to return to Ireland with such forces as he could procure, and freely offering to gratify him in all his late demands. Such an application was too flattering to the vanity of the retired general to be resisted; and with all the promptitude which the mingled emotions of love, pride, and ambition could inspire, he made his preparations,

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army into Ormond, in order to oppose him: that the news of his approach determined the English leader to send to Dublin for a reinforcement; that this reinforcement arriving safe, Strongbow led his forces to the plain of Durlus; that he here engaged O'Brien and Dal-cais, the army of Jer-Connaught, and the invincible army of Gil-Muiredhy, under the command of Connor Moenmay, son of Roderic, and was defeated with the loss of seven hundred (or seventeen hundred) men." Leland, *ut supra*.

and steered his course for Waterford, accompanied by thirty leaders of his own kindred, one hundred horsemen, and three hundred hardy and well-appointed archers.

As soon as Le Gros arrived in Waterford, and had an interview with the chief governor, it was mutually agreed they should march immediately to Wexford, and that the marriage of the former with Strongbow's sister should be performed without delay. The citizens of Waterford, naturally averse to the English invaders, and rendered still more hostile by their rigorous oppressions, as soon as the chief governor was gone, formed the desperate resolution of freeing themselves from their insolent masters by a general massacre of the garrison. The latter, little suspecting any violence or treachery within the walls, felt that confidence and security in which men generally indulge who are surrounded by their friends and adherents, and thus afford a more favourable opportunity for the execution of the designs of their secret enemies. Their commander, while crossing the river Suir, was, with his few attendants, murdered by the mariners who conveyed them; and as soon as intelligence of this event was carried to the city, all the English who could be found unarmed, were suddenly assailed, and slaughtered without distinction of age, sex, or condition. Such of the garrison as were able, on this emergency, to take up arms, joined their associates in the citadel called Reginald's Tower; and there not only succeeded in defending themselves, but at length drove their assailants from the city, and obliged them to sue for peace and accept it on the most rigorous terms.

Meanwhile the town of Wexford was a scene of joyful

mirth and splendid festivity: Strongbow's sister Basilia had arrived thither from Dublin, with a magnificent train, and had been solemnly espoused by Le Gros who received a large portion of lands as her dowry, and was invested with the office of constable and standard-bearer of Leinster. But such was the urgency of public affairs that on the following day, after the nuptials were performed, the bridegroom was obliged to commence his march for Meath, in which territory Roderic O'Connor had demolished the English fortresses, and wasted the lands of such as professed allegiance to the English monarch. But the Irish chieftains, actuated by sudden and transient impressions of passion, rather than by any reasonable and settled principle of duty or public spirit, having deserted O'Connor, that prince had commenced his retreat into his own province, before the arrival of the British forces, and, though pursued by the enemy, he lost only about one hundred and fifty men, who were killed in the rear of the fugitive Conacians.

The success of the English in re-establishing their settlements in Meath, and the death of Donald Kavanagh, who fell in an engagement with a party of Irishmen employed in the English servi ., had an extensive influence upon the minds of the disaffected in Leinster, and an appearance of order and tranquillity was established throughout the English territories. But O'Brien, the valiant and influential prince of Thomond, was still unsubdued; and the chief governor now saw the necessity of directing his arms against that refractory and revolted chieftain. Limerick, the capital of North Munster, situated on the Shannon, about sixty miles from the sea,

was in his possession, and appeared to bid defiance to the utmost efforts of the enemy, as the river intervened and the bridges had been previously broken. Raymond, by whom its siege was undertaken, with a chosen band of six hundred men, advanced to its attack; and, discovering a place where the stream was fordable, though extremely dangerous, he succeeded in gaining the opposite side with the loss of only three of his men; and such was the effect produced upon the Irish by this desperate act of intrepidity that they fled in all directions, whilst the troops of the British commander entered the city in triumph, having slaughtered numbers of the fugitives without any resistance.*

A. D. 1175. In the meantime, Roderic O'Connor, who, amidst various afflictions, had held out for four years, and retained his hereditary dominions in Connaught, perceiving that no efficient aid was to be expected from those Irish princes and chieftains that still professed allegiance to him, and dreading an attack from the English by a force superior to his own, resolved to save his own province at least from the depredations of an incensed and victorious enemy, by a timely submission to the English monarch. This resolution was strengthened by the success which had attended the arms of the latter in other parts of his dominions, where, by the wisdom and vigorous execution of his plans, he had vanquished his unnatural

* "With the forcing of this passage, the fragment ends abruptly of Irish history left us by Maurice Regan, the secretary of Dermod, which generally agrees with the more full relations of Giraldus Cambrensis." *Gordon*. Vol. I., p. 112.

sons, and their numerous abettors and allies. Accordingly three commisssioners from Roderic, his chancellor, styled in the old English manner, Master Lawrence; Catholicus, archbishop of Tuam; and the abbot of St. Brandon, waited on Henry at Windsor, where a treaty of peace was concluded between the two parties. The terms of this peace and concord are comprised in four articles. By the first, on Roderic agreeing to do homage to the king of England, and to pay him a certain tribute, he was to possess his kingdom of Connaught in as full and ample a manner as before the arrival of Henry in Ireland. By the second, Henry was engaged to support and defend the king of Connaught in his territories; and the latter was to pay to Henry a tenth of all the merchantable hides from the lands of Ireland. The third article excepts from this condition all such domains as pertained to the English monarch himself, or his barons. And the fourth article declares, that such of the Irish as had fled from the lands held by the English barons, might return in peace, on the payment of the above tribute, or such other services as they were anciently accustomed to perform for their tenures, at the option of their lords.*

This treaty, in which Henry treated with Roderic not merely as a provincial prince, but as monarch of Ireland,†

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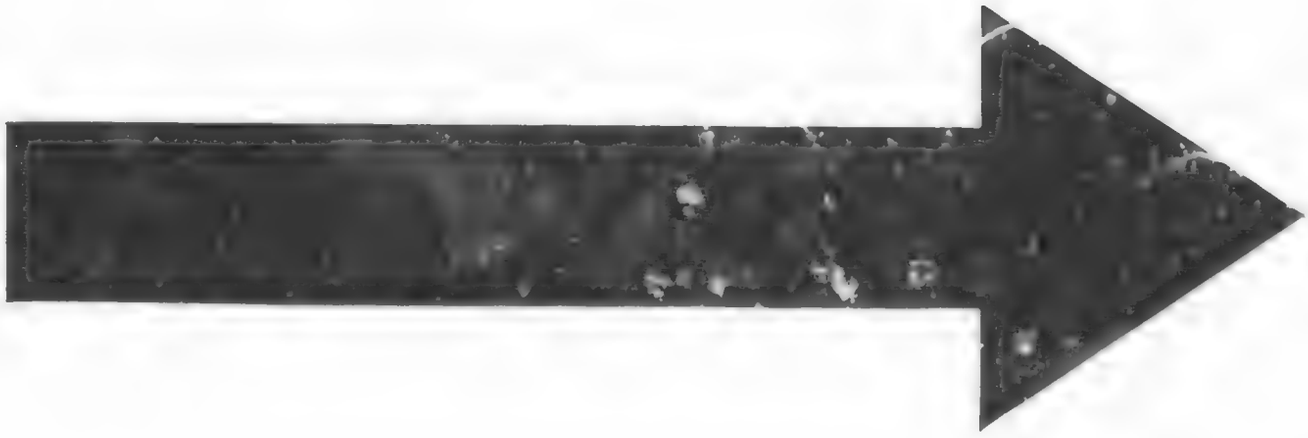
* O'Hal.

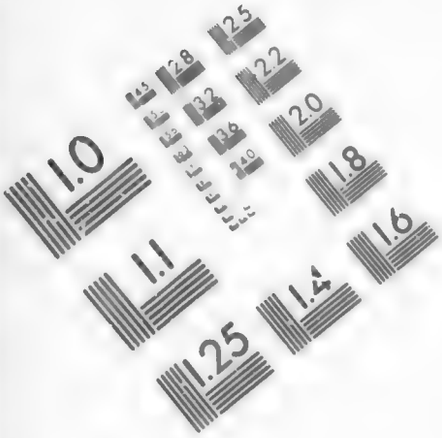
† That the Irish entertained this idea of the treaty is evident from the following extract which Dr. Leland makes from the *Annals of Leinster*:—"An. 1175. Catholicus O'Dubhy came out of England from the empress's son; with the peace of Ireland and the royal sovereignty of *all* Ireland, to Rory O'Connor, and his own (*oigedh*) province to each provincial king in Ireland, and their rents to Rory."—*Ann. Lagen. M.S.*

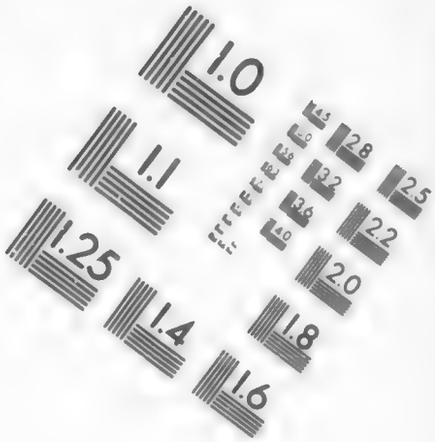
was solemnly ratified in a grand council of prelates and temporal barons, among whom the archbishop of Dublin was one of the subscribing witnesses. That artful prince, who had hitherto paid little regard to the claims of the king of Connaught upon the monarchy of Ireland, now seemed anxious that his supremacy should be acknowledged, in order that the present submission might appear to be virtually the submission of all the subordinate princes, so as to invest himself with the complete sovereignty of the whole island. The marks, however, of this sovereignty were no more than merely the payment of homage and tribute; for in every other particular the regal rights of Roderic were left inviolate. The English laws and government were evidently to be enforced only in the English pale; and even within this district the Irish tenant might live in peace, as the subject of the Irish monarch, bound only to pay his quota of tribute, and not to take arms against the king of England.*

A. D. 1176. But a people who were guided by the uncertain impulses of their own passions were not to be influenced by treaties such as this, especially as they had long since lost every idea of their obligations to obey their own nominal sovereign. Accordingly, the following year, O'Brien of Thomond, the vigorous and formidable enemy of the English power, laid siege to Limerick, and when Raymond le Gros marched for the relief of that city, the Irish chieftain, abandoning the siege, took post with his army in a defile near Cashel in order to intercept him. But the British leader, with a force consisting of eighty knights,

* Leland *ut supra*.







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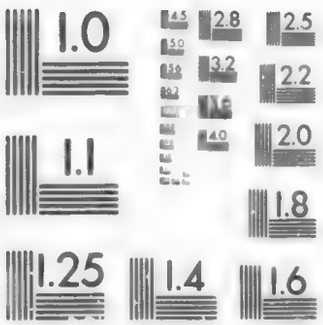

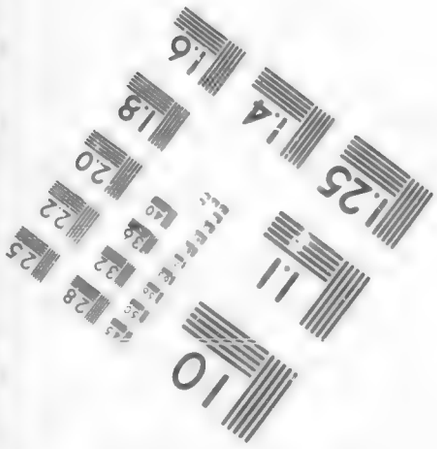

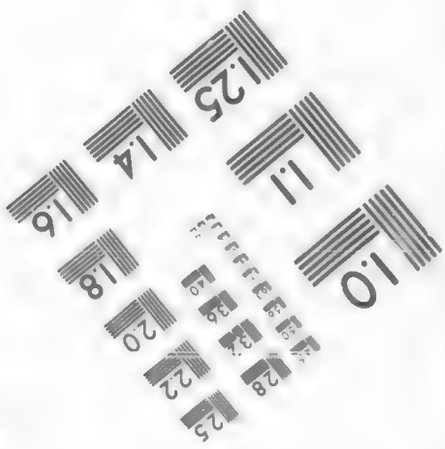

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two hundred inferior cavalry, and three hundred archers, forced the entrenchments of the enemy, and received hostages from O'Brien, as a security for his future allegiance. At the same time, Roderic O'Connor, in pursuance of his late treaty, repaired to Raymond, to deliver his hostages, and to take the oaths of fealty: so that in one day Le Gros had the honour of receiving the submission of the king of Connaught as well as of the prince of Thomond.*

Invited by MacCarthy, whose eldest son, Cormac, had usurped his principality, and thrown his father into prison, Raymond next led his forces into Desmond, and restored the injured prince to his provincial throne, for which service he received an extensive tract of land in that part of the country. MacCarthy, enraged with the unnatural conduct of his son, and to requite him for his baseness, had him cast into that prison from which he had been so recently rescued himself, and soon after put him to death, as a traitor to his prince and an usurper of his father's throne.

Raymond had scarcely accomplished this laudable task in Desmond, when he received a letter from Basilia, his wife, informing him that "her great tooth which had been so long aching was at last fallen from the socket," and intreating him to return to Dublin with all imaginable speed. The death of Strongbow being thus mysteriously expressed, lest the letter might be intercepted, he set out immediately for Dublin, after having given the city of Limerick in charge to O'Brien, being himself unable to spare any of his English troops for its garrison. But, notwithstanding the prince of Thomond upon this occasion took a solemn

* Leland *ut supra.*

oath, to guard the city for the king of England, and to restore it to the representatives of that monarch at the royal pleasure, he set fire to it in four different quarters, as soon as the British commander had taken his departure, and declared that this town should no longer continue to be the nest of foreigners. By Eva, the daughter of Dermod, whom he espoused, Strongbow left only one surviving child, a daughter four years of age, who, about ten years afterwards, became the wife of William, Earl Marshal of England.

Previously to Raymond's late expedition to Limerick, Henry, whose jealousy had been excited through the envy of Hervey of Mountmorres, had summoned the former into England; but as the troops refused to march under any other general, and the four commissioners delegated for that purpose were convinced of the extreme urgency of affairs, they had suspended the execution of the summons; and, influenced now by motives of a similar nature, on the death of Strongbow, they concurred with the council, by whom Le Gros was elected chief governor until the royal pleasure should be known upon that appointment. But notwithstanding the very favourable account of his commissioners, the English monarch continued to evince the diffidence he felt in Raymond's integrity, and he deputed to the office William Fitz-Andelm, a nobleman allied to him by blood,* and a man who is said to have been prepos-

* Arlotta, mother of the conqueror, was married to Harlowen de Burgo, by whom she had Robert, Earl of Cornwall, whose two sons were Andelm and John. Andelm had issue this William Fitz-Andelm; John was the father of Hubert de Burgo, chief justiciary of England.—*Cox.*

sessed against the original adventurers, unfit for vigorous measures, rapacious, and more intent upon his own gain and that of his adherents, than on the interests of the English colony in general.

A. D. 1177. With a numerous train, amongst whom were Vivian, the pope's legate, and Nicholas Wallingford, an English ecclesiastic, with the brief of pope Alexander, lately granted to the king in confirmation of his title to Ireland, Fitz-Andelm landed at Wexford, where Le Gros was in readiness to receive him. At this interview, the new chief governor is said to have looked with a malignant eye upon the number and gallant appearance of Raymond's train; and, turning to his followers, was weak enough to threaten that he would soon find means of humbling their pride and ostentation.* He began his administration by a stately progress along the coast, in order to inspect the forts and cities immediately vested in the king; while the ecclesiastics were on their part active in the service of their master. In a synod of the Irish clergy, which was held in the city of Waterford, the brief lately granted by Alexander III, and the former bull of Pope Adrian, were solemnly promulged; the English monarch was formally proclaimed Lord of Ireland; and the censures of the church were denounced, with the most dreadful fulminations, against all who should call in question the validity of the grant, or presume to impeach the authority of the illustrious representative of the pontiff in that island.†

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* Cambrensis, Lel. B. 1, ch. 4.

† See O'Connor's Historical Address, Vol 1, pp. 65, 86. Lanigan's Eccles. Hist. of Ireland, Vol. IV, p. 222.

Fitz-Andelm's first care, as soon as he had assumed the reins of government, was by craft or violence to dispossess the original adventurers of their best settlements, and to engross to himself and his dependants whatever was valuable within the pale. Discouraged therefore by the rapacity of the chief governor, as well as by the jealousy and suspicion of their sovereign, the most enterprising of the colonists engaged in two expeditions in quest of new settlements, the one into Connaught under the leadership of Milo de Cogan; and the other into Ulster, under John De Courcey.

The invasion of Connaught by De Cogan, notwithstanding the treaty of peace which had been agreed upon at Windsor, appears to have been without any plausible pretext whatever; but its complete failure renders it the less prominent in those acts of injustice committed against the natives, at this period, by the rapacity and inhumanity of the British adventurers. De Cogan, however, was probably induced to undertake this expedition by the magnificent promises of Murrogh, a son of Roderic O'Connor, who had already, by his own ambitious projects, involved his family and province in considerable disorder. Milo's forces, consisting of forty knights, two hundred horsemen, and three hundred archers, proceeding on their expedition, were reinforced at Roscommon by the junction of Murrogh's followers; but the allied troops were defeated without even a battle. Alarmed by this unexpected invasion of their province, the Conacians drove away their cattle, deposited their provisions in places of concealment, and even burned their churches,—an act of profanation altogether new to the Irish; and thus in a short time ren-

dered the whole country a perfect desert, without anything valuable to excite the cupidity of their invaders.

Before this time, amidst the violence and rapacity of domestic feuds, the churches in Ireland were considered as sacred and inviolable sanctuaries, where provisions of every kind, as well as the most valuable effects, might be deposited, without the danger of their being disturbed by the incursions of an enemy. But the English, far from entertaining the same respect for the sanctity of those sacred asylums, had not only seized upon the goods that were laid up in the churches, but had committed innumerable other depredations whenever their conduct met with any resistance. As the clergy of Leinster had now become the obsequious instruments of their new masters, a synod that was convened at Dublin by Vivian, the pope's legate, gave liberty to the English troops, by an ordinance, to furnish themselves with necessary provisions from the churches, upon the payment of their just value. De Cogan's followers, however, being deprived of this resource upon the present occasion by the measures which the natives adopted, were obliged to relinquish their undertaking and to return home, lest an inglorious end by famine should effect that which their enemies at the time were unable to accomplish. Being pursued without much effect by the Conacians, they succeeded in reaching their destination; whilst Murrogh, by whom they had been invited into Connaught, was left to the resentment of his countrymen, who sentenced him, with the concurrence of his own father, to have his eyes put out, as a punishment for his treachery, in attempting to betray his country into the hands of its enemies.

But the expedition of De Courcey was not so unsuccessful in Ulster, notwithstanding the spirit with which he was opposed by the gallant Ultonians. This leader, who possessed a robust constitution and great strength of body, was ardent and impetuous in all his undertakings; and by his marriage with the daughter of Godred, king of Man, and a feudatory of the crown of Denmark, he strengthened his own influence, and secured himself from the danger of Danish opposition. Addicted, however, to an imbecile superstition, he had learned from the prophecies of Merlin that the conquest of Ulster was reserved for his sword; and his Irish followers soon found out another prophet, who declared that Down, the immediate object of his enterprise, was to be subdued by a stranger mounted on a white horse, with a shield charged with painted birds. Having accoutred himself according to this description and arrived at Down, with a band of about five hundred men, he seized upon that town, and putting it in a state of defence, evinced a determination to maintain the possessions he had acquired.

Included in the treaty at Windsor which the king of England had made with the whole body of the Irish people, in the person of their monarch, the Ultonians had neither dreaded nor expected any hostilities from the English settlers; but De Courcey, relying on the grant which that monarch had previously made him of the province of Ulster, provided he could conquer it, would listen to no remonstrance and proceeded in his course of unwarrantable aggression. Vivian, the pope's legate, was then residing at Down, to whom application was made by Dunlene, the prince of that territory; and after that ecclesiastic had remonstrated in vain with

the British invader, he is said to have been so provoked with this act of injustice and so affected by the sufferings of an unoffending people, that although the chief part of his commission was to prevail on the Irish to acknowledge the title of the king of England, he now boldly advised Dunlene to have recourse to arms, and to exert himself as a brave prince, in order to rescue his territories from these rapacious invaders.*

Impelled by the necessity of his circumstances, and encouraged by the advice of the legate, Dunlene, with the aid of some confederate lords took up arms in defence of his territory, and three battles were fought; in which victory leaned to the side of the English. In the last of these engagements, however, De Courcey and his followers were placed in the most imminent danger of total extermination. Having been engaged in ravaging the lands of MacMahon, a revolted chieftain, they were attacked suddenly by the Irish in a dangerous defile and suffered great loss in their retreat to a more eligible situation. Here, however, where they must shortly have fallen victims either to the rage of their enemies or to the want of provisions, they resolved upon surprising the Irish by night, as the Ultonians were found in a state of unguarded security by Armoric of St. Laurence, a valiant knight, who had with much peril explored their position. Stimulated by the desperate circumstances under which they were placed, De Courcey's forces made a furious onset with loud uproar upon the enemy, and such was the confusion which this unexpected assault created that the Irish were slaughtered without

* Leland *ut supra*.

resistance, scarcely two hundred of them escaping, whilst the assailants lost only two men in the enterprise. Having gained this advantage over the natives, De Courcey continued afterwards to maintain his ground in the north, though defeated in two battles by a prince of the territory of Orgial, who had burned a ship of his, near Newry, and massacred all the crew.*

A. D. 1178. Through the jealousy of the English monarch excited against Raymond le Gros, Fitzandelm had, at first, been sent into Ireland, but Henry at length becoming sensible of the evils of his administration, removed him from the office of chief governor, and appointed Hugh de Lacy in his stead, with the title of lord procurator-general. This nobleman, who was eminently qualified to fill the important office to which he had been appointed, laboured to repair the losses, as well as to extend the force of the English colony. De Cogan and Fitzstephen, to whom the lands of Desmond had been granted by their sovereign, without any regard to the stipulations of the treaty made with Roderic, entered into an agreement with the prince of that territory; and the latter having surrendered to them seven cantreds of land contiguous to the city of Cork, was allowed to continue lord of the remaining twenty-four. But Philip de Borassa, who had received a similar grant of Limerick, fled to Cork with considerable trepidation, when he found that the chieftans of Thomond being resolved to oppose him, had, on his approaching Limerick, set fire to what remained, or had been repaired, of that unfortunate city.

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* Annals of Leinster at 1178. Leland, B. I., Cap. 5.

By the vigilance of De Lacy, as well as his prudence in managing the affairs of the colony, matters soon began to wear a more promising appearance. He had retarded the English power in Meath, which had been lost during the administration of his predecessor, and had encouraged a coalition of English and Irish by his marriage with the daughter of Roderic O'Connor, but having been assailed by the calumnies of the envious, he was recalled by his sovereign, and the government was committed to John, constable of Cheshire, and the bishop of Coventry, two strangers to the country, and little qualified for this important trust. However, in the short space of three months, the king was convinced of the impolicy of this appointment, as well as of the injustice of his suspicions respecting the late chief governor; and De Lacy was restored to his office, notwithstanding the efforts of his enemies to the contrary.

The weakness of the colonial government in its infantile state afforded many opportunities to the native princes of overturning it altogether; but involved in the perpetual surge and eddy of their own dissensions they continued regardless of everything that was not immediately connected with their own local concerns. To that spirit of retaliation which was evinced from the earliest period by the Irish chieftains, the interests of their country had always been sacrificed, and a succession of outrages had been perpetuated which remain as so many blots upon the pages of that national history. Nor did such feuds now rage with less violence than formerly, when those toparchs might have perceived the general calamity which their divisions had brought upon their common country.

"A young prince of the Hy-Niall race, and heir apparent to the rights of that family, fell by the hand of a rival lord: this rival was killed in revenge. The partisans on each side as the several powers prevailed, were butchered with every circumstance of triumphant barbarity. In Connaught the blinded son of Roderic was rescued from prison by his partisans, and the flame of dissension kindled.*

Other sons of that unfortunate monarch, who had long proved the implacable disturbers of his government, were engaged in the most desperate hostilities; and such was the violence with which faction raged among the Conacians that sixteen young lords fell in one battle, the heirs apparent of the ruling families in the western province.† Desmond and Thomond were in a similar state of intestine commotion; and the chieftains of Leinster were animated by mutual jealousies, as well as by the deadliest hatred towards each other.

Whatever opinion may be formed of the justice of Henry's claim to the sovereignty of Ireland, it is cause of regret that the whole island could not at this time be reduced to one regular system of government; and that some plan could not have been devised to prevent those evils which distracted the nation and rendered the country a perpetual scene of carnage and desolation. Had the English monarch been faithful to the promises he made when he first visited Ireland, and secured to the people that form of government which some say he made them swear to uphold, no revolution could have been more happy to

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* Gordon.

† See Leland. Book I., Cap. 5.

the nation, nor any act more glorious to the monarch himself. How attached soever the natives might have been by long habits to their own institutions, they could not but have felt the heavy, grievous, and arbitrary exactions of their lords; and from these they would have been exonerated by the establishment of English laws. It is true the feudal incidents were severe enough, but still they were certain and fixed; and it is probable had the English system been introduced into Ireland at this period, its superiority to that which prevailed would have recommended it to the people, and that they would have thankfully received it, notwithstanding their national prejudices and predelictions. But the English monarch, far from acting such a generous part, having made extensive grants to his Norman adventurers and raised them to the rank of independent princes, only added to the causes of party collision, and reduced the country to a more grievous state of warfare and anarchy than it had hitherto suffered since the time of the Danish invasion.

A. D. 1181. Amidst the vast political and social changes which were going forward in his native country, and while he himself was an exile in Normandy by the command of his new sovereign, Lawrence O'Toole, the archbishop of Dublin departed this life in the winter of the year 1181. This prelate was a native of Leinster, and in his early years had been delivered by his father, a Lagenian chieftain, as a hostage to Dermod Mac Murchad, who then filled the provincial throne. Committed to the charge of the abbot of Glendalogh, at that period in life

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* See O'Con., Dissert. p. 268.

when the habits of the mind receive their incipient tendency, he soon contracted a taste for monastic seclusion: and by the sanctity of his manners, and his devotional austerities, he was recommended to that high station in the church which he afterwards filled as archbishop of Dublin. The nobility of his birth, as well as the esteem in which he was held by his countrymen for piety and zeal, soon attracted the attention of every grade in society, and he was necessarily called forth to take a part in public affairs. To Roderic O'Connor in all his difficulties he had proved a valuable counsellor, as well as a diligent and faithful emissary; and his zeal for his country must appear the more amiable, as it was marked with a degree of moderation which was seldom to be found amongst the Irish of that unhappy period. The part which he acted in the synod of Cashel, and his apparent desertion of the cause of his former master, have been the subject of severe animadversion by some intemperate writers;* but perhaps the culpability which seems to attach to him has been too highly coloured by partiality and prejudice. Affected by the wrongs which his countrymen sustained, and the iniquitous proceedings of some of the king's representatives in Ireland, even after he had found it necessary to submit to Henry, he made a journey to England for the purpose of laying before that prince those injuries and

* Dr. Phelan calls him a "manifold traitor to his church, his country, his native prince, and the sovereign of his own election," but perhaps he formed this opinion from a very partial view of the whole of his conduct. *See Phelan's Vol.* of the Church of Rome in Ire., p. 19.

oppressions.* Summoned from that country to attend the council of Lateran, in the year 1179, he obtained the king's permission to attend; but not until he had taken a solemn oath to do nothing at that meeting which would be prejudicial to the interests of the English monarch.† Oaths, however, in that gloomy age of superstition and immorality had but little influence upon mankind in general, when their interest was concerned, especially when they were taken under the influence of fear or coercion. O'Toole displayed therefore his zeal against the injustice of the English governors in Ireland, and made the most affecting representations in this council of the wrongs and calamities of his countrymen. It is asserted by some Irish writers,‡ that the archbishop on this occasion obtained a revocation of the papal grant of Ireland which had been made to the English monarch; but, be that as it may, it is certain that his loud and vehement complaints were well received by the members of that ecclesiastical assembly. Cambrensis observes, that "he exerted himself with all the zeal of his nation, for the privileges of the church, and

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* "On this occasion, we are told, that an extraordinary and whimsical incident had well nigh proved fatal to the prelate. He was officiating in the church of Canterbury, when a man of unsound mind, struck suddenly by the circumstances of the place, the appearance, and the occupation of the archbishop, seized the thought of honoring him with the crown of martyrdom; and for this purpose assaulted him with the utmost violence; nor was Lawrence rescued from his attack till he had been desperately wounded in the head."—*Leland, ut supra.*

† Lanigan, Vol. IV., p. 238.

‡ O'Sullivan, Beare's Catholic Hist., p. 62.

against the king's authority;" and, in acknowledgment of his eminent services, he was raised by his holiness to the dignity of Apostolic legate. But he was never permitted to exercise this newly-acquired authority: for, on his return to Ireland, arrayed in this ecclesiastical panoply, he was prevented by the king, and was obliged to spend the remainder of his days in Normandy.

O'Toole was succeeded in the archiepiscopal chair by John Comyn, an Englishman, whom Henry had recommended to the clergy of Dublin, and whose election had been confirmed by Lucius the Roman pontiff. Ireland at this time required men of abilities to repair the loss of some of the most distinguished of the original adventurers; and it is probable that Comyn was promoted to his new dignity rather for his vigour and abilities in temporal affairs than for those virtues which were necessary in the character of a Christian bishop.

A. D. 1182. By the desolating current of time, and the mutation of human affairs, the original adventurers were being swept off the stage on which they had acted so prominent a part, and it became necessary that their place should be supplied by others whose attachment to the interests of the English monarch would be the best security for the permanence and stability of the colony. Five years had now elapsed since De Cogan and Fitz-stephen had established themselves in Desmond; and the latter, though deeply affected by the death of a favourite son, seemed to have the prospect of a peaceable repose provided for his old age. But such is the uncertainty and transitory nature of all human enjoyments, that his hopes were soon blasted by a series of unexpected and untoward circumstances.

While journeying from Cork to the town of Lismore, in order to confer with some of the citizens of Waterford, De Cogan was assassinated with six others, one of whom was his son-in-law and a son of Fitz-stephen's; by Mac Tire, an Irishman, whom he had regarded as a trustworthy friend, and who had invited him and his company to his house with the strongest professions of hospitality that he might have an opportunity of perpetrating this infamous deed.* Mac Carthy of Desmond instantly attacked the city of Cork with all the forces he was able to assemble; and Fitz-stephen, overcome by sorrow for the murder of his friends, was unable to take any vigorous measures for its immediate defence. The garrison, however, having been reinforced by troops which Raymond Le Gros had conveyed by sea from Wexford, obliged MacCarthy to submit to his enemies; but an accumulated load of sorrows had produced its effect upon the mind of Fitz-stephen, and on the arrival of these troops his reason had resigned its throne.

By the death of some, and the retirement of others, the original adventurers had now nearly all departed from the former theatre of their exploits: and amongst those whom the king had sent to supply their place were Richard de Cogan, brother to Milo, and Philip Barry, both officers of courage and experience. Barry was accompanied by his brother Girald, better known by the name of Cambrensis, an ecclesiastic high in the king's favour, and whom he had appointed as tutor to prince John, his youngest son. The end for which Cambrensis is said to have paid this visit to Ireland, was to inspect the state of the country for the

* Cambrensis, Leland, *ut supra*.

information of the young prince, whom his father intended to constitute its governor. The insolence of this Welsh ecclesiastic, together with that of the new archbishop of Dublin, towards the Irish clergy was little calculated to conciliate a nation already but too much prepossessed against the British name and authority: and the mutual recriminations of the two parties in their ecclesiastical synods were by no means serviceable to the cause of religion in general. By the Irish clergy the English were accused of every species of lewdness and immorality; whilst the latter retorted the charge of barbarism, falsehood, and treachery, upon the Irish. A reply is preserved made by Maurice, archbishop of Cashel, to Cambrensis, when the latter contemptuously remarked that among all the saints of this country there could not be found one martyr. "It is true," replied the prelate, "our country boasts of numbers of holy men and scholars, who have enlightened not only Ireland, but all Europe; but we have ever held piety and learning in too much reverence to injure, much less to destroy the promoters of either. Perhaps now, sir," added he, "that Englishmen have settled in our island, and your master holds the monarchy in his hands, we shall be enabled to add martyrs to our catalogue of saints." To add political to religious discontent, the government was transferred from De Lacy to Philip de Barossa, who distinguished himself in nothing but acts of rapacity and oppression, until he was superseded by another whose maladministration nearly brought ruin upon the English colony in this country.

A. D. 1185. Prince John, the youngest son of Henry the Second, had been nominated Lord of Ireland by his father

in a council of barons and prelates, so early as the year 1178; and now having attained the age of eighteen, he prepared to enter upon the functions of that dignity with which he had been invested. In order to remind the English monarch and his son, upon this occasion, of his own supreme dominion over this island, as well as to cast perhaps a degree of sarcasm on the foppish imbecility of the juvenile governor, the Roman pontiff is said to have sent him a curious diadem of peacock's feathers hallowed by his own benediction, as a token of his investiture. Accompanied by a train of Norman courtiers, and several grave churchmen,* John embarked with a fleet of sixty ships, and after a prosperous voyage arrived in Waterford. On his arrival as chief governor of the country, such was the alacrity and cheerfulness with which even the most refractory of the Irish lords hastened from all parts to make their submissions to him that important consequences might have resulted from a little prudent management in the administration of this prince. But John possessed no single requisite qualification for this office, and the

* Amongst the ecclesiastics who attended upon the young prince was Cambrensis, who has left us a history of the proceedings of his countrymen in Ireland at this time, erroneously styled a *History of the Conquest of Ireland.*

"What I would say on the whole is, that if hatred, enmity, open professed hostility, special interest and actual engagement in the destruction of the ancient Irish nation; if ignorance of their language and wilful passing their history, even the most authentic of their records: if these can render Cambrensis an author of credit, then no writer however idle, unwarrantable, incredible, false or injurious is to be rejected." *Preface to Walsh's Prospect.*

result was soon such as disappointed the expectations of the people in general.

Those chieftains of Leinster, who had from the beginning espoused the cause of the English monarch, were naturally the foremost in giving expression to their feelings of regard and submission to their youthful chief governor. The national garb of the Irish,* so different from that of the foppish young noblemen in the prince's train, at first excited the merriment of the latter; and when the Irish lords, according to the cordiality of their own established customs, advanced without any ceremony to kiss the young prince, they were rudely pushed back by his attendants, who were as great strangers to true politeness, as they were to prudence and sound policy. And, as if this insult were not sufficient to men entertaining such high ideas of their own rank and respectability, the whole company burst into loud laughter, plucked their beards in derision, and treated them in other respects with a degree of indignity that was well calculated to rouse every feeling of resentment in the breasts of the native chieftains.

Enraged with the treatment they had received, and meditating vengeance in their hearts, the Irish lords retired from the court, and meeting with others of their countrymen, who were hastening to the prince, they informed them

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* Of the dress of the Irish, one of our historians remarks: "If the women were attentive to adorn their persons, the men affected rather a warlike aspect: their thick beards, and great whiskers, their glibbs or bushy hair hanging careless over their visage, joined with an athletic body, gave them a fierce and even hideous appearance." *Lel. Prelim. Disc.* XXXVI.

how they had been requited for their former loyalty and present zeal. The intelligence was rapidly diffused, and produced a most powerful effect upon the nation in general. It was justly remarked, that when the firm allies and friends of the English monarch were treated with such intolerable indignity, little favour could be expected from the new chief governor towards those who had been inveterately hostile to the English government. But had this act of imprudence on the part of the Normans been likely to be forgotten, their subsequent conduct was well calculated to cause the resentment of the people to burn against them with still greater fury. The minions of the young prince, who were as rapacious as they were insolent, seized the lands of those Irish who held them by English tenure under the lords of the pale, and attempted also, by pretended grants and legal frauds, to treat the early British colonists in a similar manner.

Resolved to take vengeance on the oppressors of their country, as well as influenced by the indignity with which they had been treated themselves, the insulted lords and dispossed tenants of Leinster fled to their countrymen in Connaught and elsewhere, and made such representations of the conduct of the English, as induced the native chieftains to lay aside for the present, their private dissensions, and to unite their forces against the common enemy. A storm therefore, from all quarters, burst at once upon the British settlements, whilst the foppish courtiers and effeminate soldiery that had come from England with the young prince, shrunk from the danger; and, seeking their own safety in fortified places, left the defence of those settlements to the veteran colonists. In the first fury of assault,

the carnage and desolation that were spread in every quarter presented a scene revolting and horrible. The forces of the settlers, with their leaders at their head, fell beneath the fury of their excited antagonists, as the garrison of Ardfinnan, the troops of Robert Barry at Lismore, those of Robert de la Poer in Ossory, and those of Canton and Fitz-hugh in other places. By the intrepidity of Theobald Fitz-walter, the founder of the noble family of Ormond, Cork was preserved in this general visitation; and Meath was, to a considerable extent, protected by the valour and prudence of William Petit.

The prevalence of these disorders throughout the country had produced a baneful effect upon the prosperity of the English settlements. In Meath the lands of Hugh de Lacy had sustained considerable damage from the devastations of the natives, but as soon as tranquillity was, in any measure, restored, that nobleman set about repairing it with indefatigable perseverence. Intent upon this object he proceeded to erect new forts in every situation which required places of strength, or to repair the old ones wherever that was practicable. In carrying on these important works he was accustomed to oversee the labourers himself, among whom were many of his Irish tenants, to give them such directions as were necessary, and frequently to labour in the trenches with his own hands. But erecting a fortress upon the site of an ancient monastery, named *Darrome*, said to have been founded by St. Columba, one of his own workmen, shocked even to madness, at such profanation of this ancient seat of devotion, seized the moment when De Lacy was employed in the trenches; and as he stooped down to explain his orders, drew out the battle-axe, which

had been concealed under his long mantle, and at one vigorous blow smote off his head.* The assassin was too much favoured by his compatriots not to effect his escape, and he fled to his countrymen in arms, exulting in the merit of having thus taken vengeance for the sacrilegious conduct of his victim.

1186. Embarrassed by weightier matters in other parts of his dominions, the English monarch had shown almost as much imbecility in the management of Ireland as he had of ability in conducting the affairs of his territories in England and France. At length, being informed of the ruinous effects produced in that country, by the maladministrations of his son, he recalled the young prince, after eight months of rueful disorder; and John De Courcy was appointed chief governor in his stead. Had the Irish princes remained united, the term of this office, as well as the very existence of English rule in Ireland, would have been rendered extremely precarious; but, after the first fury of their assault on the British settlements, the revival of their former feuds left room for De Courcy to make arrangements for the defence of the colonists. In Connaught the sons of Roderic O'Connor had taken up arms against their father; and completed the misfortunes of that aged monarch. Forced by Conquovar, his eldest son, to resign his provincial government, Roderic took refuge in the monastery of Cong, where he spent the remaining twelve years of his life, and died in 1198, in the eighty-second year of his age.

This prince has been blamed because he did not make a

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* Leland, citing from Anonymous Annals in MS., B. 1.

more vigorous effort in defence of his territories when the sovereignty of the nation was wrested from his hands. But when we consider the circumstances under which he was placed, and over which he could have had no control, his character must be viewed in a much more favourable light. In the earlier part of his life, his failings, which were conspicuously prominent, received but little amelioration from their neighbouring good qualities. Possessing all the haughtiness of an Irish prince, and at the same time devoted to voluptuous enjoyment, his youth was spent in a course of conduct which, even if no other causes had interfered, would have ultimately produced the most ruinous consequences. Rash and precipitate he generally showed himself repulsive to those who would faithfully reprove his juvenile licentiousness, whilst the ductility of his temper, and the easiness of his disposition became a snare to him in his path, and placed his passions under the direction of bad men who flattered his vices and endeavoured to make them the means of promoting their own advantage. With a degree of severity which was, perhaps, not altogether justifiable, his father, Turlogh the Great, attempted to break this ungovernable spirit, and, for this end, had him put frequently under confinement: but this had little effect upon his general conduct until more serious reflection produced its own effect, and so far convinced him of his error that he soon forgot the over-rigorous treatment he had received, and was wholly reconciled to his royal father. Bred up in the camp almost from his infancy, his military skill was by no means contemptible; and notwithstanding his licentiousness in private life, he never devoted to pleasures the time which the public service required to be spent either

in the cabinet or in the field. With increasing years his better qualities became predominant. By his affability and sincerity, as well as by his generosity, he gained many friends who adhered closely to his interest amidst all the trials and vicissitudes he experienced. The deplorable state to which the nation had been reduced by the prevalence of faction, when his administration of the sovereign authority commenced, necessarily created for him a number of avowed, as well as of secret enemies; and notwithstanding he was able sometimes to repress their insolence, they leagued with the invaders in the hour of his distress, and, very justly, became the first victims of their own treachery. Nor was it in the time of comparative prosperity that he evinced his zeal for the good of the nation, but his constancy in the public service when fortune cast a lowering cloud over the destinies of his country appeared in that fortitude, equanimity, and passive courage which dignified the last scene of his administration. Such was Roderic O'Connor, the king of Connaught, and the last, as well as by far the most unfortunate of the native monarchs of Ireland.

The disordered state of Connaught after the resignation of Roderic invited the attention of De Courcey, and from a defensive warfare, which he was obliged at first to maintain, he resolved to attempt the subjugation of the province. Having marched, however, into that country, and finding the forces collected to oppose him too formidable, he made an inglorious retreat, which he effected with considerable difficulty and the loss of some of the bravest of his knights.*

* See Leland, *ut supra*.

Meanwhile disturbances prevailed everywhere in Ulster, and several of the chieftains of that province lost their lives in the petty disputes which they carried on with each other, as well as with the English settlers and with the chief governor himself. Nor had the late attempt upon Connaught calmed in the least the ceaseless vortex of internal strife. Conquovar Moienmay, who after the resignation of his father had gained the ascendancy, was subsequently murdered by one of his own brothers, and that brother again fell by the hands of a son of the murdered dynast. Distracted by party rage, and torn asunder by the violence of its rulers, the province remained for some time in a state of anarchy, till at length Cathal, surnamed *of the Bloody-hand*, one of the sons of the late monarch, established for a time his authority over Connaught, and threatened to restore the Irish monarchy which had been lost by the misfortunes and miscarriages of his father. Amidst all these commotions De Courcey was enabled to maintain the authority of the English government, and to protect the settlement, not more by his own vigour and abilities than by the dissensions of his enemies; until the death of Henry the Second, which took place in July, 1189. The changes which followed put an end to his vigorous administration.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

The difficulty of pronouncing the Celtic names of places and persons mentioned in the foregoing history, has suggested to the editor the expediency of making a few remarks which may tend, partially, to remove it. No general directions can be supplied which would enable the reader, who may be entirely ignorant of the Irish language, to pronounce such names with unfailing accuracy; some ability to read and pronounce the language is absolutely required, in order to ensure such a result; and even in the case of a person so qualified, names are spelled so differently by different authors, that it is not always easy to recognize words as the same, which may nevertheless designate the same place or person. The reason of this diversity is obvious when we consider that the Celtic language, still spoken in many parts of Ireland, has almost no surviving literature.

Nevertheless, it may be a little help to the reader to remember that when two or more vowels occur together in any word he should rarely pronounce more than one of them; thus, the name AENGHUS is pronounced ANGUS, the vowel E being elided. It may here, also, be observed that the letter H has frequently no power appreciable or capable of being rendered into a customary sound in English. The letter C is invariably pronounced like the English K. The consonants BH, and MH, are pro-

nounced like V. In fact when the language is written or printed in the ancient Celtic character, the H does not occur, and a mark or dot is placed over the preceding consonant to indicate the proper sound. Thus, also, GH is pronounced nearly like W.

A few words used in the volume are added, with their pronunciation annexed, which will shew the general system perhaps more effectually than more lengthened remarks on this subject.

	Pronounced
Sabhul (the place where St. Patrick died),	Saul.
Feidhlim (a proper name),	Felim.
Ban-sidhe (a name occurring in connexion with a popular superstition),	Banshee.
Boroihme (an adjunct to the name of the celebrated king of Munster),	Boru.
Teamhra (the palace of the Irish monarchs, as occasionally spelled),	Tara.

The foregoing examples of pronunciation are given not as *exact*, but with the view of rendering the sounds, in English letters, as nearly as all practical purposes require. In a language like the Irish, consisting, properly, of only eighteen letters, of which one-third are vowels, the difficulty which we have stated and exemplified is easily accounted for. Correctness and harmony of pronunciation are attainable only by an adept.